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Pat Conroy's
Christmas
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The *SL* Guide to
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(PAGE 149)

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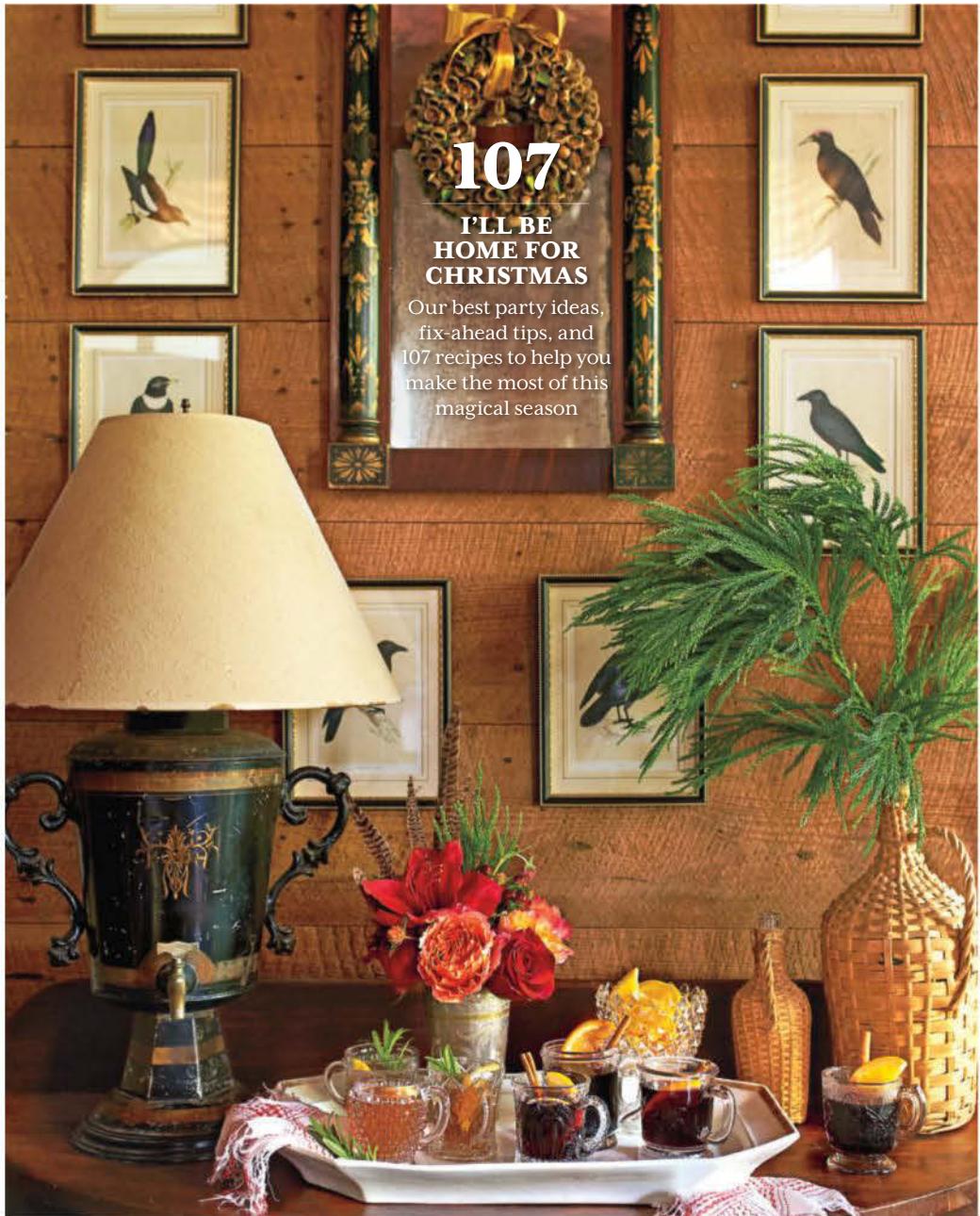
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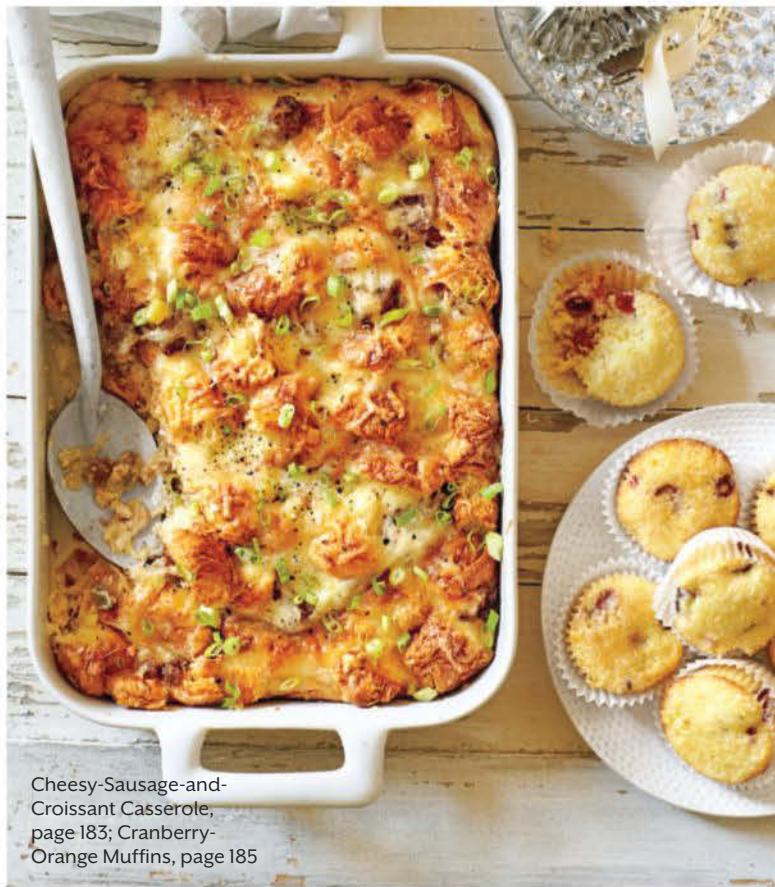
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A Safe Trip Home

This issue is dedicated to all the troops who can't be with us for the holidays

In 1943, my grandfather JD Evans was a young doctor stationed at Craig Army Air Base near Selma, Alabama, when he got word that he was being shipped to the India-Burma Theater. He sent his commander a message asking if they needed anything special from the States. "Don't bring any uniforms," came the reply. "We have plenty of uniforms. Bring Scotch."

So JD boarded the transport plane with the clothes on his back and a trunkful of Scotch whisky, which I assume made him very popular. He was gone for two years, leaving behind a 3-year-old son (my father, John) and a 1-year-old daughter (my Aunt Dorritte). He whispered to Dad he would bring him a samurai sword when he returned, gave him a hug, and said good-bye.

As a father myself, it's hard to imagine that kind of sacrifice—the missed birthdays, bike rides, beach trips, and especially Christmases—but that is the hard job so many men and women are doing to serve our country. As the holidays approach, there are hundreds of thousands of Americans deployed overseas, far too many of them in harm's way. Some will be thinking of their homes and loved ones in the South Carolina Lowcountry, the West Virginia mountains, the Texas plains, the Mississippi Delta, and all through the South. This issue, with the theme "I'll Be Home for Christmas," is dedicated to them—and their safe return.

It's also in their honor that we're running "Pat Conroy's Christmas Memories," an essay that starts on page 160. As you may know, Conroy grew up the son of a Marine fighter pilot (known in the family as The Great Santini), so he spent many Christmases without his father. This story is about the ones they did spend together, right up to the end. As Conroy describes it, "[Christmas] was a day that not even the Marine Corps or all the wars in the world could touch."

Lucky for me, I'm headed home to Memphis for Christmas this year, and chances are, my own father will recount how JD Evans packed all that Scotch in lieu of uniforms. (He loves that story.) He'll also talk about meeting JD at the train station in Memphis when he was 5 years old, and how the only way he knew his dad was because of the samurai sword he was carrying. I've heard it a million times, but somehow it never gets old.

SID EVANS, EDITOR IN CHIEF
SID@SOUTHERNLIVING.COM; @SIDMEMPHIS



EACH MONTH, WE GET A LOT OF READER LETTERS. BELOW IS AN EXCERPT FROM ONE OF OUR FAVORITES.

LETTER OF THE MONTH:

In October, you shared a story about Southern women and their recipe secrets. I once gave my mother a cookbook and asked that she measure, record, and share her recipes with the next generation. She took months to complete her assignment. A year later, my brother said he could not quite produce the same results. By this time, my mother's illness (Alzheimer's) had progressed. One day, I was cooking her favorite lima bean soup. I caught her lifting the lid and adding sugar. I said, "Mother, that's not in your recipe." She giggled and said, "That is why my cooking will always taste better." She confided she added just a taste to all her recipes. Since I am the only daughter, I will keep the secret! Many thanks for providing me a trip down memory lane.

—RUTH K.

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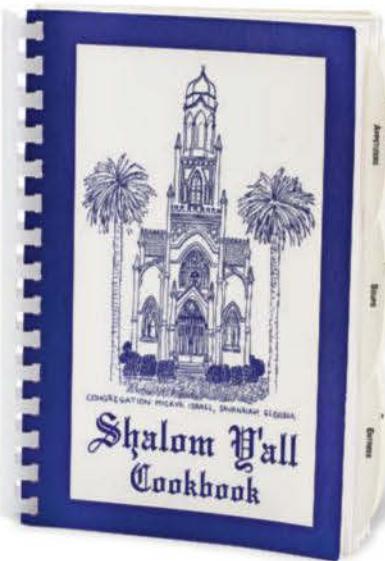
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Whether sharing blintzes at their annual food festival or homemade challah bread at their Sabbath luncheons, Savannah's Congregation Mickve Israel never misses a chance to celebrate faith through food. The group's cookbook, *Shalom Y'all*, serves up their favorite Jewish recipes with a side of Southern hospitality.



POTATO LATKES

Shred potato and apple through the large holes of a box grater. Serve latkes with sour cream or applesauce.

2 1/4 lb. russet potatoes, grated

1 Fuji apple, peeled and grated

1 large egg, beaten

1/4 cup matzo meal

1 Tbsp. apple juice
2 Tbsp. sour cream
1 Tbsp. fresh lemon juice
1 Tbsp. butter, melted
1/4 tsp. ground cinnamon
1 1/2 tsp. kosher salt
1/2 tsp. ground black pepper
Vegetable oil
Thinly sliced fresh chives

1. Spread potato and apple onto dry kitchen towels; roll up and wring towels to remove liquid. Combine potato mixture, egg and next 8 ingredients.
2. Pour oil to a depth of $1/4$ inch in a large skillet. Heat oil over medium-high heat; drop potato mixture, by tablespoonfuls, in

batches; slightly flatten each latke. Cook 2 minutes on each side or until browned. Drain latkes on paper towels. Keep warm on a wire rack in a jelly-roll pan in a 200° oven. Sprinkle with chives, and add salt to taste.

MAKES about 2 dozen.

HANDS-ON 30 min., **TOTAL** 30 min.



TEMPLE KUGEL

1 (8-oz.) package cream cheese, softened
1/2 cup butter, softened
1 1/4 cups sugar, divided
8 large eggs, well beaten
4 1/2 cups milk
2 1/2 tsp. vanilla extract
1 tsp. fresh lemon juice
1/8 tsp. kosher salt
1 (8-oz.) package egg noodles, cooked and drained
2 cups cornflakes, crushed
2 Tbsp. ground cinnamon
Vegetable cooking spray

Preheat oven to 350° . Beat cream cheese and butter in a large bowl at medium speed with an electric mixer 2 minutes or until creamy. Gradually add 1 cup sugar, beating well. Add eggs, beating until blended. Stir in milk and next 4 ingredients. Transfer mixture to a lightly greased (with cooking spray) 13- x 9-inch baking dish. Combine cornflakes, cinnamon, and remaining $1/4$ cup sugar; sprinkle over noodle mixture. Bake 1 hour and 15 minutes. Cool and cut into squares.

MAKES 6 to 8 servings. **HANDS-ON** 10 min.; **TOTAL** 1 hour, 25 min.



NEW YEAR'S APPLE CAKE

Vegetable oil makes this nondairy cake extra moist.

2 tsp. ground cinnamon
2 cups plus 5 Tbsp. sugar
6 apples, cut into 1-inch pieces (about 7 cups)
4 large eggs
3 cups cake flour
1 Tbsp. baking powder
1 tsp. table salt
1 cup vegetable oil
1/4 cup fresh orange juice
2 1/2 tsp. vanilla extract

1. Preheat oven to 350° . Stir together cinnamon, 5 Tbsp. sugar, and apples; toss to coat. Beat eggs at high speed with an electric mixer 2 minutes or until thick and pale yellow. Gradually add 2 cups sugar, beating until blended. Stir together flour, baking powder, and salt. Stir together oil and orange juice. Add flour mixture to egg mixture alternately with oil mixture, beating at low speed until blended. Add vanilla, beating until just blended.

2. Pour half of batter into a greased (with shortening) and floured 15-cup tube pan. Arrange half of apple mixture over batter. Top with remaining batter and remaining apple mixture. Bake at 350° for 1 hour and 30 minutes or until golden and set. Cool in pan 10 minutes. Remove from pan.

MAKES 10 to 12 servings. **HANDS-ON** 30 min.; **TOTAL** 2 hours, 10 min. 

To order *Shalom Y'all* from Congregation Mickve Israel, call 912/233-1547.



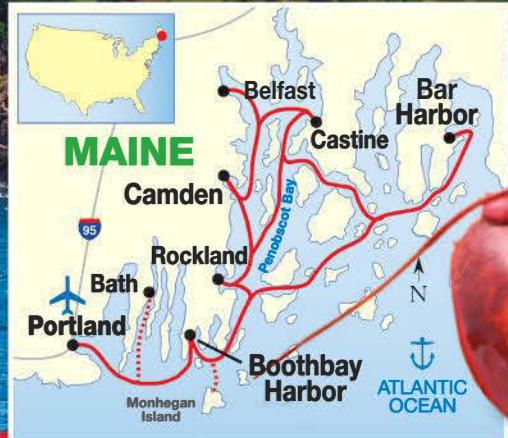
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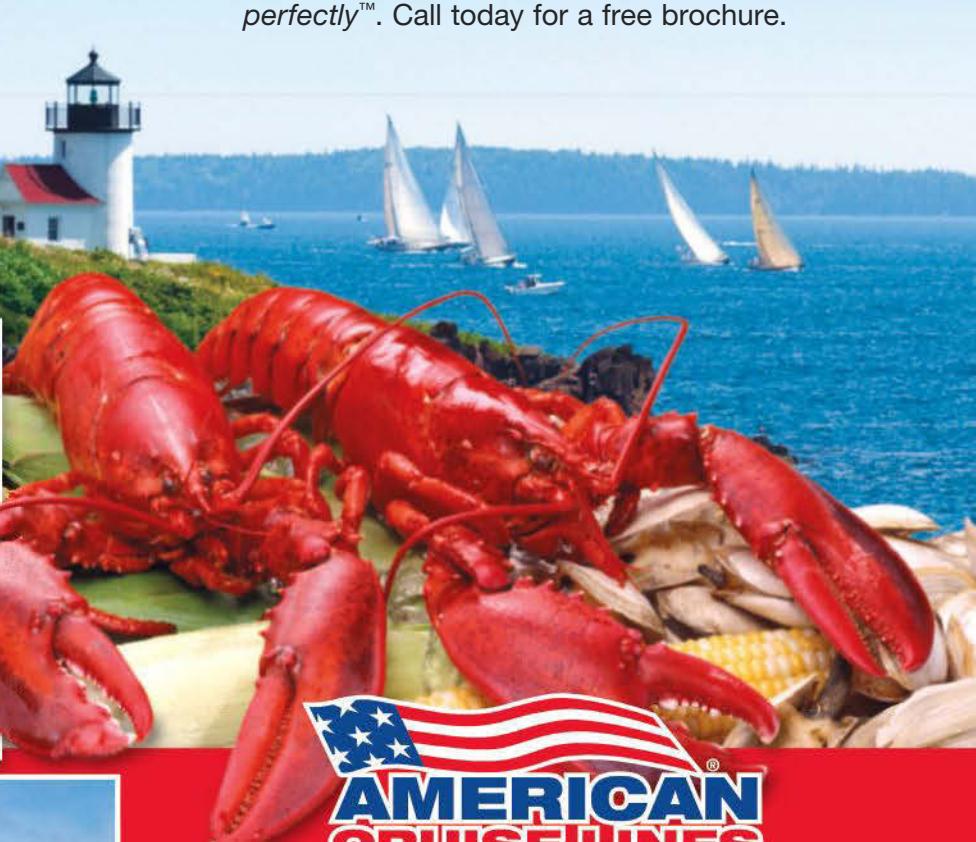
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DRESS FOR THE OCCASION

Whether you're headed to a fancy soiree or a low-key dinner, take a cue from these New Orleans tastemakers to inform your holiday dress code

COCKTAIL PARTY

WORN BY: Jazz singer Robin Barnes (robinbarnesmusic.com), known locally as The Songbird of New Orleans. The musician, who also moonlights as a designer of the activewear line **Fit By You** (fitbyyou.co), shares tips to get dolled up.

1. "If you need a formal look but don't want to spend the money on something you can wear only a few times, rent—don't buy." **Kate Spade New York Dynasty Red Dress**, \$75; renttherunway.com
2. "Add a glitzy piece that won't take over your whole look." **Crystallography Box Clutch**, \$250; bhldn.com
3. "Bold earrings bring attention to your eyes. When I perform, I use this trick to draw the crowd's gaze to mine." **Clare Earring**, \$325; ellenarthurjewelry.com

Robin Barnes
in front of the
Soniat House in
the French
Quarter





Jane Scott Hodges in a private dining room of the historic Soniat House hotel

DINNER PARTY AT HOME

WORN BY: Jane Scott Hodges, owner of **Leontine Linens** (leontine-linens.com)—a line of couture linens hand-stitched by Kentucky artisans. Jane Scott helps define New Orleans style with her timeless aesthetic, which is reflected through her shop, in the pages of her recent book (*Linens: For Every Room and Occasion*), and, of course, in her personal style. The queen bee of entertaining tells us how she gets ready to play hostess.

1. “Make your favorite dress work double duty. Top it with a crisp, white collared shirt and tie it at the waist to create a totally different outfit.” **Grace Kelly-Satin Twill, \$196; donna-morgan.com**
2. “A metallic D’Orsay pump and a chain-embellished ankle strap make this affordable shoe showstopping.” **Sam & Libby Ankle Chain Pump, \$42.99; target.com**
3. “When it comes to jewelry, I love eye-catching pieces. You only need one or two of them to complete your outfit.” **Marseilles Large Drop Earrings, \$245; suzannadai.com**

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Andi Eaton at hip cocktail joint Cure on Freret Street.



COCKTAILS WITH FRIENDS

WORN BY: Andi Eaton, the city's do-it-all style mogul. She blogs (ouiwegirl.com), designs for her label **Hazel & Florange**, runs a boutique, and puts on Southern Design Week. Formerly known as NOLA Fashion Week, the event showcases designers from around the region. Her new book, *New Orleans Style*, traces the city's rich fashion culture. Here, the girl-about-town tells us how she gets ready for a night out.

1. "Take your statement pieces to the next level by stacking several necklaces together. I like to pair my favorite designer piece with less expensive ones." **Cameron Necklace**, \$383; elizabethcolejewelry.com
2. "Don't be afraid of a black over-the-knee boot. Pairing with black leggings blurs the line between where the boots end and pants begin for a look that's edgy but still ladylike." **Fukiko**, \$460; schutz-shoes.com
3. "A top with a tailored cut, structured fabric, and graphic texture goes a long way. I'll layer this piece with a blazer when commuting to holiday get-togethers and on its own for spring and summer months." **Mod Top in Slate Tech**, \$248; emersonfry.com



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Milla Clutch (in Cranberry Patent, Black Saffiano, and Elderberry Sparkle), \$195; zacposen.com

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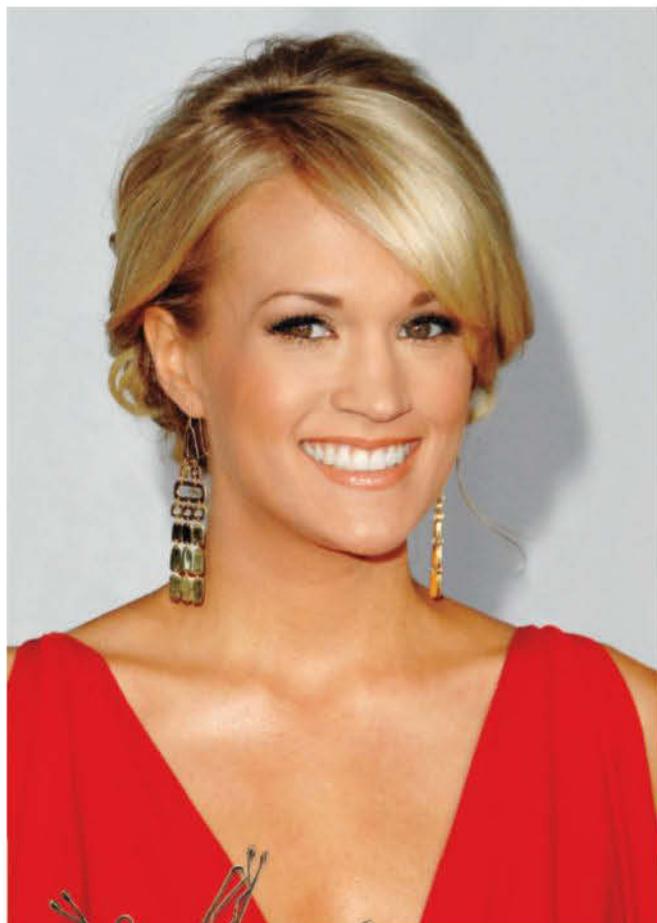
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STYLE | BEAUTY ICON

Carrie Underwood

*Who better to draw party inspiration from than this Oklahoma beauty who always dazzles on the red carpet? Carrie's stylist, **Melissa Schleicher** of Parlour 3 Beauty in Nashville, shares tips to get the singer's elegant style*



AN "UNDONE" UPDO

"Just start pinning strands for a messy-glam style." Goody Colour Collection Metallic Bobby Pins, \$4.29; kmart.com



BOUNCY LOCKS

"Separate hair, then curl each section. Pin curls to the top of your head and let cool before loosening."

Hot Tools 1/4" Gold Curling Iron, \$45;
jcpenney.com



SHINY STRANDS

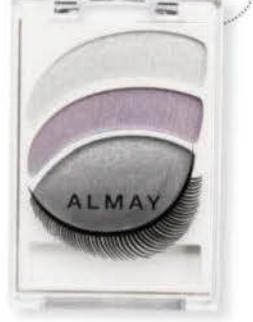
"A pea size tames flyaways and adds shine." **Touch of Gloss, \$38;** shuuemuraartofhair-usa.com

SOFT HOLD

"This spray is super manageable. It easily brushes out."

Resistance Double Force Controle Ultime, \$39;
kerastase-usa.com





STARRY EYES

"With any shimmery eye shadow, add a little water to intensify the color and make it last." **Almay Intense I-Color Shimmer Eyeshadow, \$7.49;** ulta.com

VOLUME THAT LASTS

"Flip mane and spray on roots for next-day-hair texture that is not stiff."

Oribe Dry Texturizing Spray, \$42; birchbox.com



EXTRA BODY

"Tease hair at root. Use a bristle brush to avoid frizz."

Marilyn The Teasing Brush, \$13; drugstore.com

by STEPHANIE GRANADA ~ photographs by ROBBIE CAPONETTO



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Time Savers

'Tis the season for merrymaking and errand-running, all the while still looking lovely. To help, we've rounded up nine products that get you out the door in the blink of an eye

1. Skin looks instantly smoother and tighter after spending just 60 seconds with this treatment. **REN Flash Rinse 1 Minute Facial**, \$48; sephora.com

2. Use nightly to mend damage and soften strands as you sleep. **Repair & Protect Overnight Miracle Serum**, \$7.99; pantene.com

3. This BB cream acts as hydrator, primer, and light concealer. **Magic Skin Beautifier BB Cream**, \$10.95; lorealparisusa.com

4. Go for a formula that stays put all day. **24-Hour Eye Shadow and Liner**, \$32; trishmccevoy.com

5. Try under lipstick for lasting color

and on the brow bone as a highlighter. **NYX Cosmetics Wonder Pencil**, \$4.50; nyxcosmetics.com

6. This brush dries and volumizes in 15 minutes. **John Frieda Salon Shape Hot Air Brush**, \$39.99; ulta.com

7. You need less makeup when brows are defined. **L'Oréal Paris**

Brow Stylist Sculptor, \$6.99; drugstore.com

8. Squeeze in a mani without the wait time. **OPI RapiDry Quick-Dry Top Coat**, \$11.99; amazon.com

9. A versatile basic, cream blush also stains lips. **Butter London Cheeky Creme Blush**, \$20; beauty.com



6 FINDS FOR HOLIDAY HOSTING

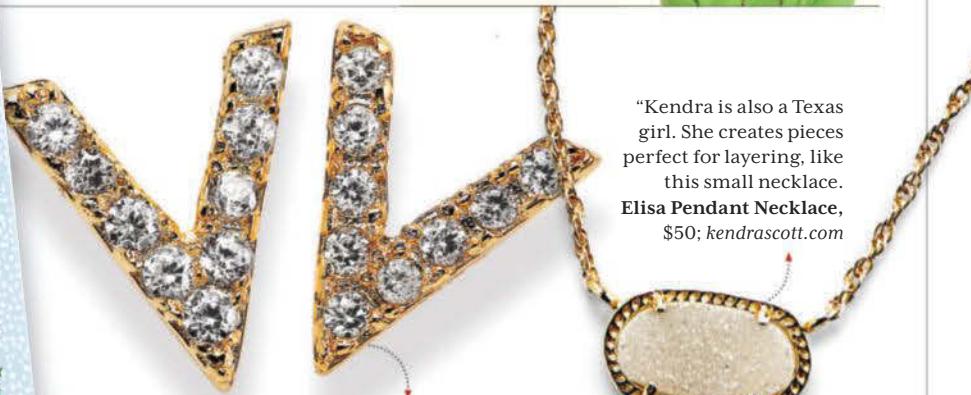
I love preparing a friendly gathering: the cooking, cocktail making, decorating, even the anxiety of running around as guests prepare to arrive. No matter if you're hosting an intimate dinner or a large, themed party (who doesn't adore a theme?), the holidays are about the memories, the traditions, and, most importantly, spending time with those you love. So rather than fretting about how you look, enjoy the precious moments with these easy pieces that will have you looking as gracious and gorgeous as your party—with minimal effort.



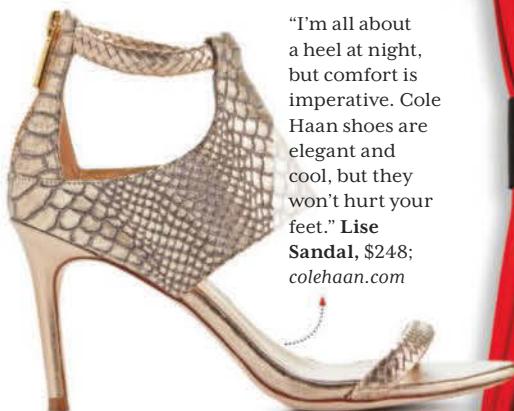
"I'm addicted to this mascara for evening makeup. It looks as if you're wearing fake lashes." **Dior Addict It-Lash Mascara**, \$26; sephora.com

"THIS WINTER I'M LOVING DAINTY JEWELS I CAN WEAR TIME AND AGAIN."

Ritz "V" Earrings, \$65; goldenthreadshop.com



"Kendra is also a Texas girl. She creates pieces perfect for layering, like this small necklace. **Elisa Pendant Necklace**, \$50; kendrascott.com



"I'm all about a heel at night, but comfort is imperative. Cole Haan shoes are elegant and cool, but they won't hurt your feet." **Lise Sandal**, \$248; colehaan.com



"The ease and versatility of this Rachel Pally dress makes it ideal for the busy hostess."

Della Dress in Heartthrob, \$202; **Wide Leather Belt**, \$99; rachelpally.com



Our Editor-at-Large **JENNA BUSH HAGER** shares her favorite fashion picks and beauty buys for December.



Festive Red

You'll feel no shortage of cheer with these products featuring the most symbolic color of the season

1. The timeless fragrance has been updated with rose and orange blossoms for a party-ready scent. **Red Door Eau de Toilette Naturel Spray**, \$68/3.3 oz.; elizabetharden.com
2. Try this bold liner with your red lipsticks, or wear it alone for a creamy, matte finish. **bareMinerals Marvelous Moxie Lipliner in Amped**, \$15; qvc.com
3. This lip tint is slim enough to fit in tiny clutches. **Lip Tint in Lover's Choice**, \$49; kjaerweis.com
4. A lightweight formula conceals wrinkles to create a smooth surface for makeup. **Revlon Age Defying Wrinkle Remedy Line Filler**, \$12.99; drugstore.com
5. Perfect your mistletoe-ready pout with this lipstick that softens and repairs dry winter lips while delivering a deep red hue. **Rouge Ecstasy in 400**, \$34; giorgioarmanibeauty-usa.com
6. This mascara doesn't clump and will stay put all through your holiday shopping and eggnog sipping. **L'Oréal Paris Voluminous Million Lashes Excess**, \$7.99; target.com
7. To keep this pretty red polish intact, apply a clear topcoat every other day. **Forever Yummy**, \$8.50; essie.com
8. Use a curler with padding that won't crimp or pull lashes. **Revlon Extra Curl Lash Curler**, \$7.99; walgreens.com

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Southern
HOME & GARDEN

EXPERT TIPS FOR A BEAUTIFUL HOME—INSIDE AND OUT



Return to Red

*Take inspiration from the season and revive your passion for the classic hue.
From brick to cherry, tomato to ruby, this color is ripe for a comeback*

Moroccan Red (1309);
benjaminmoore.com

Concentrate on Pattern

As the owner of Perch (perch-home.com), a home-design shop in New Orleans' Garden District, Caroline Robert mixes classic antiques with contemporary accents—lending a fresh perspective to the Big Easy. In her own Audubon Park home, she designed a vibrant retreat for guests to stay during the holidays.

WHAT SHE DID

SKIPPED QUIET COLORS—such as beige, blue, and green—often in bedrooms. Instead, she defined her small guest room with a bold and cheerful red-and-white palette inspired by the room's makeshift closet, a telephone booth she found on eBay.

EMBRACED PATTERN with aplomb. Caroline picked one print (Quadrille's Paradise Background) and color-matched it to the phone booth. Then, she used it liberally on the bed's pelmet and the Roman shades. "Pick your motif wisely," she says. "I'll still love this when I'm 80."

SIMPLIFIED THE REST of the room to keep the pattern from overwhelming, with white walls, barely there furnishings, and crisp white bedding accented with tailored monograms.



Lighten Up

To counter the formality of the fabric, a pair of clear Kartell side tables from Caroline's shop adds a modern touch.

Fancy Framework

A pagoda-shaped pelmet is a nod to the fabric's chinoiserie print and adds architectural interest to the formerly "bland, box-shaped" room.



meet the designer

CAROLINE ROBERT

YOUR PERSONAL STYLE IS... Classic with a bit of funkiness infused. "Grandma chic" sums it up well.

BEST COLOR ADVICE: I follow the 60-30-10 rule—60% dominant color, 30% secondary, and 10% accent. Unless you find the perfect shade—in that case, throw this theory out the window and use that color all over.

GO-TO RED PAINT: Moroccan Red by Benjamin Moore. It's warm, earthy, and vibrant.

RED WORKS BEST TO... Punch up a room, just like the ideal shade of red lipstick can wake up a bare face. Try it out first using a few key pieces, such as a distinctive Murano glass dish or a lamp.

BIGGEST INSPIRATION? My 5-year-old. His art always motivates me to experiment with new color combinations.

NO. 1 DECORATING RULE: Don't take design too seriously. Have fun with it, and be inspired.



DON'T DENY YOUR DRY EYES

It may surprise you that if you're experiencing any of these symptoms, you may have **Chronic Dry Eye disease**:

- ▶ Dryness/itching
- ▶ Burning/stinging
- ▶ Feeling like something is in your eye
- ▶ Sensitivity to light
- ▶ Blurry vision
- ▶ Problems wearing contact lenses
- ▶ Watering eyes

Chronic Dry Eye can limit your ability to perform daily activities that involve your eyes. Over time it can have potential consequences for your eyes—damage to the front surface of the eye, increased risk of infection, and effects on your vision. The good news is that treatment options are available.

TAKE ACTION NOW

- ▶ **SCHEDULE** a medical exam with your optometrist or ophthalmologist to see if you have Chronic Dry Eye. Don't wait.
- ▶ **GO TO mydryeyes.com,** **TAKE** a brief questionnaire eye doctors use to assess Chronic Dry Eye, and **SHOW** the results to your eye doctor.





Realize the Power of Paint

Embracing his penchant for plaids and an English Country aesthetic, designer Ron Wolz with Bittners (bittners.com) created a perfectly cozy study for his clients' home in Louisville, Kentucky. "The homeowners requested a place where they could mingle with friends after dinner, sit by the fire, drink bourbon, and enjoy good company," he says. "Red really brought the wow factor to this space."

WHAT HE DID

MATCHED THE COLOR scheme to the velvet sofa. Its earthy red hue led Ron to Benjamin Moore's Red Oxide. He applied it on the walls from top to bottom and also carried it over to the bookshelves. This enhanced the room's architecture and created a clubhouse-like mood.

BROUGHT IN LIGHT by counterbalancing the cavelike space with crisp planes of white—from the bright ceiling to the pale Moroccan rug. A gold-framed mirror bounces

light around. "I wanted it to be dark and cozy but not oppressive," he says.

USED FURNISHINGS that multitask to make the room a retreat for entertaining. In place of a coffee table, Ron used a tray-topped ottoman that doubles as a cocktail station or extra seating.

ADDED A SENSE OF PLACE with equestrian accessories. Brass hurricanes, handsome tartans, and lots of leather hint at Kentuckians' love of horses. "We tried to reflect that deep spirit," Ron says.

Red Oxide
(2088-10);
benjaminmoore.com

Case by Case
Because the shelves were front and center, Ron made sure to style them with balancing colors, proportions, and textures. Preserved boxwoods bring the outdoors in, tobacco-colored books complement the red, and elegant white urns punctuate the palette.



meet the designer
RON WOLZ

GO-TO RED PAINT

CHOICE: I always prefer warmer tones. They have more life to them than those with blue undertones. Sangria (2006-20) by Benjamin Moore is a versatile option with a nice yellow base.

TIPS FOR FINISHES:

To get a true representation of a red paint color, I use the most matte finish possible. If I'm working in an older home, I'll sometimes use a higher gloss to accent the millwork.

TIMELESS FABRIC

CHOICE: Cowtan & Tout's Byron in Red (1150-05) is a rich, dark, linen-cotton blend. It's soft to the hand and works well for upholstery.

BEST TIME TO USE RED:

When I want to add warmth to spaces. Red adds an instant richness and drama unlike any other color can.

TOP ADVICE ON

DECORATING WITH RED: Rooms are meant to be used and enjoyed, so keep that in mind, and always work in some lightness to help balance out the intensity of red.

Use Splashy Accessories

Southern Living Associate Decorating Editor Elly Poston pulled together a mix of vibrant accents to elevate an all-white home office to become a chic and youthful space in this Homewood, Alabama, cottage. "Red is energizing and upbeat—great for a workspace," she explains. "It's definitely not a snoozy color." This light-filled office shows off her Southern preppy style, and the striking arrangement of red accessories makes a major design impact without a big commitment of time or money.

WHAT SHE DID

ANCHORED THE SETUP with Bunny Williams Home's bold Ohm Mirror. This key piece was the starting point around which all the other reds in the room revolved. "Be careful in your color selection, and don't mix shades too liberally," Elly says. "Pick your inspiration red, a hue that speaks to you, and then use that as your scheming point and stay true to it throughout the process."

TRIMMED FABRICS with fringe for extra flair. Simple cotton duck curtains from Pottery Barn were

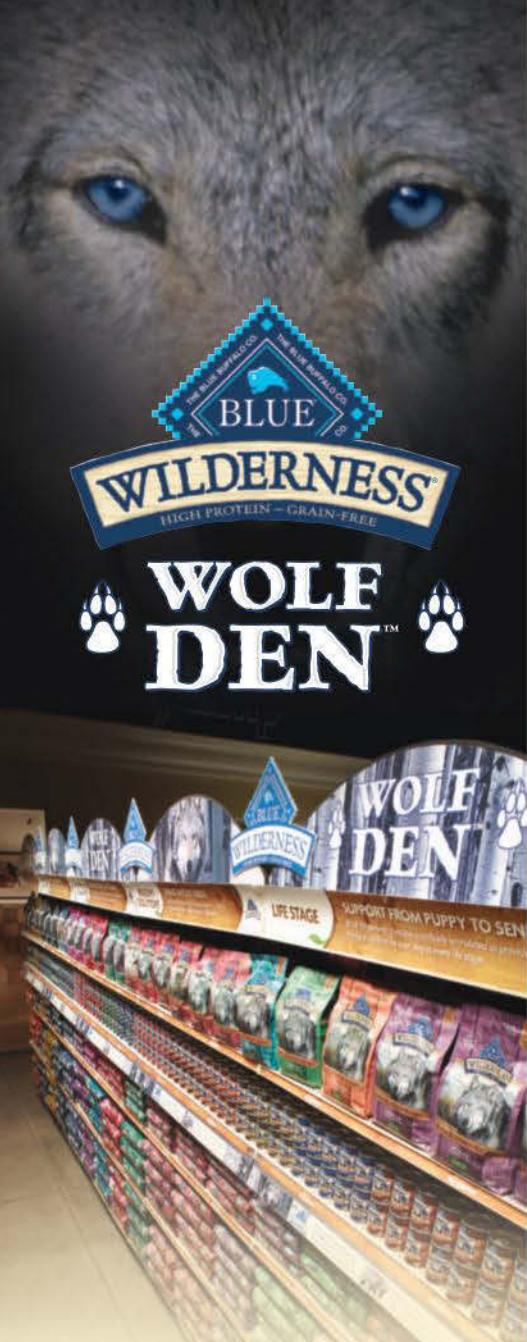
Bottoms Up

Affordable flat-weave rugs, such as this Dash & Albert stripe, are appropriate in hardworking rooms. You can even install a large rug like wall-to-wall carpeting, creating a tailored look in a small space.

"I LIKE MY REDS SHINY TO REFLECT THE LIGHT,"
ELLY SAYS. *"IT REALLY KEEPS IT FRESH
WITH BRIGHT WHITE."*



Gloss
Colonial Red;
rustoleum.com



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embellished with upscale Samuel & Sons tassels, while an extra-thick box seat cushion borders on brilliant thanks to a flouncy fringe trim.

EMPLOYED LOTS OF WHITE to balance the room's candied apple accents for a pairing that looks light and bright. The mix is most evident in the marbleized Christopher Spitzmiller lamp, while the tiny block printed seat cushion (sisterparishdesign.com) proves that a little pattern goes a long way.

MADE ACCESSORIZING EASY by keeping the color combo simple and specific. With red as her guide, it was easy for Elly to choose grab-and-go accents—candles, trays, a day planner, and even a needlepoint throw pillow (jonathanadler.com). Its ampersand motif is a cheeky reference to the home-office setting.

▲ Metalworker
Warm brass adds sophistication and freshness—from the lamp base to the desk accessories by L'Objet. Though clearly on the opulent end of the spectrum, they still pair nicely with inexpensive brass brads and tacks.

▼ Sitting Pretty
A vintage peacock chair bought for a song at an antiques shop gets a new lease on life thanks to a couple of coats of inexpensive high-gloss spray paint.



meet the
designer

ELLY POSTON

YOUR DECORATING

STYLE: Southern preppy and snappy for now, but always evolving. A touch of Bohemian influence is nice as long as the palette feels fresh.

GO-TO RED: To me, coral red is fun and exotic. I prefer Cayenne (SW-6881) by Sherwin-Williams.

FAVORITE RED FABRICS:

Brunschwig & Fils has done a great job refreshing traditional reds lately. And I love Peter Fasano's Double Dotty in Cherry.

ITEMS BEST SUITED

FOR RED? A bold slipper chair, mirror, or lamp would each make a strong statement.

BEST PLACES TO USE

RED: In an entertaining space, red can serve as a talking point. You can also make a "live-and-let-live" declaration with bold red wallpaper in the entryway.

WHO SHOULD REACH

FOR RED? People who are spunky enough to wear red lipstick or a shiny red pedicure. I associate red with fun and festive things—and people.

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EDITOR'S PICKS

BRING THE LOOK HOME

GIVE RED A SPIN ON YOUR WALLS, FLOORS, AND MORE WITH THESE INSTANT STYLE UPDATES



1. Colbert in Red by Pindler, from \$27.55/yard; onlinefabricstore.com

2. Blanco Red Jute Woven Rug by Bunny Williams, from \$59; dashandalbert.annieselke.com

3. Checkered Out in Lacquer Red by Robert Allen, from \$78/yard; calicocorners.com

4. Nanking Stripe in Ming on White, \$132/roll, available through Meg Braff Designs; 516/801-4939

5. Mixology Talon Red Tumblers by Waterford, \$175/pair, available through Bromberg's; 205/871-3276

6. Lacquer Bath Tray in Red, \$34; jonathanadler.com

7. Square Gingham Pouf in Red, \$88; serenaandlily.com

8. Red Stripe Mugla Kitchen Tea Towel, \$3.99; worldmarket.com

9. Datong Tissue Box in Red, \$80; pigeonandpoodle.com

10. Capiz Lotus Candleholder in Red, \$16; furbishstudio.com

11. Chili Pepper (2004-20), top, and **Million Dollar Red** (2003-10), bottom; benjaminmoore.com

12. Dolce Pom Pom Fringe in Candy Apple (985-45494-25), by Samuel & Sons from \$41.25/yard, available through Ainsworth-Noah & Associates at ADAC; 404/231-8778

13. Buffalo Check Porcelain Mug, \$14; cwonder.com

14. Burma in Red, from \$109.20/yard; sisterparishdesign.com

15. Linen Trim Chandelier Shade in Burnt Red, \$15; ballarddesigns.com

16. Les Touches Brunschwig & Fils Cherry Red Pillow Cover, from \$45; sierrapillows.etsy.com



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FABRICS

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minted.com

STYLE

CLASSIC CREOLE HOME

ARCHITECT: David Sheley SIZE: 3,200 square feet PLAN NAME: Cane River Cottage; southernliving.com/caneriver

WHY WE LOVE IT The simple massing and deep, hipped roofline on this West Indies-influenced house mimic Louisiana's original plantation homes beloved for their signature blend of French and Caribbean architecture. Built on a raised foundation to catch every breeze and fronted by a picturesque picket fence, the inviting porch beckons us to come in, sit back, and wave hello to passersby.

WHAT MAKES IT WORK The home's exposed porch rafters and perfectly placed dormers add a verticality and symmetry that balance the squat roofline. Authentic, sturdy building materials such as patinaed cedar shingles give the new home an instant old-house feel. The creamy white-and-deep green palette is classic but still feels fresh.

THE WOW FACTOR Instead of designing a typical front entry, David created a sprawling wraparound porch that segues into a back porch through a secondary kitchen entrance on the front left. This door helps connect both porches and eases traffic flow in and out of the kitchen. The cook has an excellent vantage point to keep an eye on the happenings outside.

ONLY IN THE SOUTH This true-to-the-region cottage offers everything that a traditional Southern home needs—plenty of space to entertain friends and family and loads of street charm to win over new guests with a big porch, a sidelight-flanked front door, and tall double-hung windows. To create an even more welcoming look, add a lamppost to help guide everyone home.

TRY OUT
THIS
PALETTE

TRIM
Arcade White
(SW7100); sherwin-williams.com



SIDING
Swiss Coffee
(OC-45); benjaminmoore.com



SHUTTERS
Studio Green
(93); farrow-ball.com

BUILD IN
THE CHARM

SHAKE ROOF

#1 Medium Handsplit Treated Cedar, from \$249/100 square feet, available through Cole-Hall Lumber Company; 205/663-2900



POST & LANTERN

Holland Post with French Quarter Lantern, from \$1,075; bevolo.com



BRICKS

Chamfered Full Range Pavers by Ragland Clay Products, \$2.45/square foot; available through alabamabrick.com



PICKET FENCE

Veranda Composite Heartwood Gothic Picket Panel, 67 1/2 inches long, \$54.97 each; homedepot.com

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Lush greenery warms up this icy gray room for the holidays.

Sparkle in Silver

Inspired by the room's ethereal walls and the magnolia trees outside, designers Katie Collins and Martha Sweeney bring an everyday glamour to the table

THIS DALLAS-BASED duo may spend their weekdays creating well-appointed interiors at their design firm, Collins & Sweeney, but in their off time, they are hostesses renowned for keeping their cool while putting together parties—especially holiday dinners. “We always want to create a relaxed but festive atmosphere that will surprise

our guests,” says Martha. To do so, they forgo the traditional red-and-green color scheme and use understated elements such as backyard greenery and mix-and-match china. “There’s nothing better than a table roaring with laughter,” Martha says, “and a beautiful setting and delicious food can really enhance that happy feeling.”



meet the designers

KATIE COLLINS AND MARTHA SWEENEY

• **RECTANGULAR OR ROUND DINING TABLE?** Katie (above right): Round. It's more conducive to good conversation.

• **BEST CENTERPIECE:** Martha: Magnolia branches arranged loosely in a silver Champagne bucket.

• **RECIPE FOR DISASTER:** Martha: Leaving the three-onion gratin off the menu!

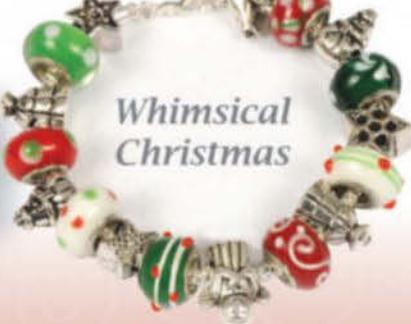
• **A SOUTHERN HOSTESS SHOULD ALWAYS...** Martha: Use her heirlooms. During the holidays, it's a way to honor your family's history.

• **EVERY SOUTHERN HOSTESS SHOULD BE...** Katie and Martha (in unison): Gracious.

• **YOUR FAVORITE CHRISTMAS TRADITION:** Katie: Every year, our friends heat up their pool so the kids can swim. (Don't forget, we're in Texas!)



Aqua Bling



Whimsical
Christmas



Biker
Girl



Luck of
the Irish

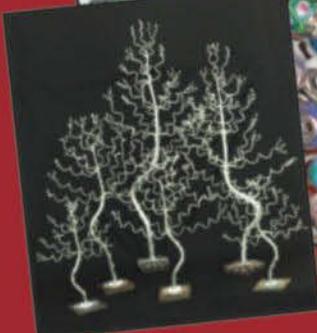
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▲ THE BAR

"I force amaryllis bulbs into bloom to get me in the Christmas spirit," says Martha. "They're a cinch to dress up with ribbons to fit the color scheme." Arranged in a punch bowl filled with ornaments, the flowers salute the bar, where the designers always set out a bottle of chilled Champagne and plenty of flutes for guests to serve themselves. "It's fun and easy," Katie says.



◀ THE PLACE SETTING

They pulled dishes from both the kitchen and the china cabinet. For a sentimental touch, Martha used her grandmother's formal salad plate (Raynaud's Si Kiang), but dinner is served on a basic stoneware plate from Wisteria. Bold green glassware accents the pear-colored charger, and a sprig of seeded eucalyptus livens up plain white linens. "A few key heirloom pieces give a table history," says Martha.



◀ THE MANTEL

Carry your living room's Christmas decor into the dining room with accents such as a magnolia wreath and garland. "Greenery is both beautiful and accessible," says Martha, who scours her yard for ideas. Embellish the garland with elements from the tablescape such as gray brunia berries, boxwood clippings, mercury glass votives, and green ribbons to tie together the whole look.

◀ THE PLACE CARDS

Calligraphy-adorned cards embossed with laurel branch mark each seat. Though they seem formal, they simplify seating and make guests feel welcome. "It's a small detail to show you've thought about everything," says Martha.

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Based on NV650 vs. Dyson DC65. **ASTM F608 (embedded dirt in carpet), †ASTM F558 measured at the hose, [‡]ASTM F420 (Access Depth Under Furniture measured with POD in hand using floor nozzle). Dyson® and Dyson Ball™ are registered trademarks of Dyson, Inc.

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PUPPY



CONTAINER

For a similar look, try Seagrass V-Weave Baskets, from \$14.99; worldmarket.com

+



GIFT WRAP

For a similar look, try Bean's Washable Wool Throw in Cedar, \$89; llbean.com

+



TAG

Bone Shaped Dog Party Cut-outs, \$7.99/20; bigdotofhappiness.com

+

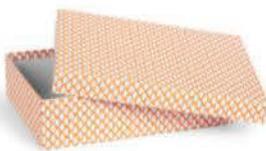


EMBELLISHMENT

Leather, Nylon and Brass Orange and Olive Green Collar (from \$16) and Leash (\$19); sucushop.etsy.com

2

SHIRT



CONTAINER

Crochet Box in Medium, \$16; smockpaper.com

+



GIFT WRAP

Ribbon and white buttons, prices vary; joann.com

+



TAG

Assorted papers (cut into pocket and bow tie shapes), prices vary; acmoore.com for locations

+



EMBELLISHMENT

Assorted hard candies, from \$8.75/100 pieces; orientaltrading.com

3

JEWELRY



CONTAINER

Celebrate It Jewelry Box in Kraft, 99 cents; michaels.com

+



GIFT WRAP

Crepe Paper Streamer (roll around box to form a ball shape); 89 cents/roll; partycity.com

+



TAG

Gift Tags in Tiny Leaf, Cozy Cottage, and Triangle Grid, \$8/8; eggpress.com

+



EMBELLISHMENT

For a similar look, try Vintage Snow Covered Beige Trees, from \$21.99/3; christmastraditions.com

4

TOY



CONTAINER

Artrminds Paper Maché Round Box, in various sizes from 99 cents; michaels.com

+



GIFT WRAP

Toys Under the Tree Personalized Wrapping Paper, \$15/5 sheets; minted.com

+



TAG

Assorted paper (cut into circles and pierced with a hole puncher), prices vary; acmoore.com for locations

+



EMBELLISHMENT

Clothespins; joann.com; for similar vintage ornaments, try ebay.com

HOLIDAY HEAD TURNERS

Austin, Texas-based floral designer Elizabeth Lewis reimagines Christmas bouquets with bolder colors and shapelier silhouettes

Dark and Dramatic

The Materials: Coleus foliage + bush ivy + artichokes + pomegranates + red spray roses + hellebores **The Vase:** An earthy dough bowl

Staying Power: Three days



Step 1

NESTLE a shallow bowl within a larger horizontal-shaped vessel. It doesn't need to fit perfectly but should be stable.



Step 2

ARRANGE coleus and bush ivy around the base of the interior container. Secure their stems into florist foam. Create movement by tucking in one or two longer branches to extend out of the display.



Step 3

CLUSTER artichokes and pomegranates in odd-numbered groups of three or more. Place most of the weighty stems low within the arrangement. Fill in holes with spray roses and hellebores.



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Sculptural and Organic

The Materials: Bush ivy + buckthorn berry branches + variegated Pittosporum + ivy

The Vase: A vintage pedestal Champagne bucket **Staying Power:** Five to seven days

Step 1

BALL up chicken wire, and wedge it in the bottom of the bucket. A more eco-friendly choice than typical florist foam, it will help anchor the branches as you insert them.

Step 2

ADD bush ivy to the bucket, placing more on the left side for an interesting organic aesthetic.

Step 3

CLUSTER three stems of buckthorn berries on the right and two toward the back. Then add the variegated Pittosporum and place trailing ivy on one side for a modern, asymmetrical look.

Red Punch

The Materials: Amaryllis + rose foliage + carnations + tea roses + anemones + ranunculus **The Vase:** A classic Revere bowl **Staying Power:** Three days



Step 1

ANCHOR the arrangement with amaryllis or another large flower that will act as a focal point. Select blooms in a range of reds to give dimension to this monochromatic look.



Step 2

FOR THE MIDDLE GROUND, add rose foliage and then tuck in affordable fillers such as carnations and tea roses, placed low in the arrangement.



Step 3

ADD some bolder flowers (such as anemones and ranunculus) above and in the center for depth. Allow their graceful stems to remain long, trimming them slightly only if necessary for balance.



Classic Cheer

The Materials: Pine + incense cedar + eucalyptus pods + ranunculus + carnations

The Vase: A footed brass vase **Staying Power:** Five days



Step 1

INCORPORATE the season's greenery to serve as a backdrop for delicate flowers.



Step 2

CLUSTER the eucalyptus pods toward the back of the arrangement, and add more to drape over the front of the container.



Step 3

ADD ranunculus stems, mimicking the way flowers grow in nature by inserting some down low and placing some on top to create varying levels. Then tuck in a few carnations to fill in holes. 

ONLINE

Web exclusive! For a New Year's Eve arrangement from Elizabeth, visit southernliving.com/holiday-flowers



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CONTAINER RECIPE

1. Monterey cypress
2. 'Blush Pink' nandina
3. Possumhaw branches
4. White florists' cyclamen
5. 'White Peacock' ornamental kale
6. Variegated English ivy

Fill the Tub

Galvanize your winter colors using this cool container



The other day, my wife, Judy, asked me if I had any ideas for an easy container garden we could grow outdoors for winter. I didn't, but my colleague Gardens Editor Gene Bussell did.

He used a Vintage Galvanized Bathtub Planter (williams-sonoma.com); similar ones are also for sale at antiques shops. Working from back to front, Gene paired a small Monterey cypress (*Cupressus macrocarpa*) with a 'Blush Pink' dwarf nandina (southernlivingplants.com) displaying splendid burgundy foliage. Next, he inserted cut branches of possumhaw holly by the cypress. He then added white florists' cyclamen, 'White Peacock' ornamental kale, and variegated English ivy in front. Cyclamens can't take frost, so tuck them into the planter while still in their pots so they can be moved inside on days when the temp drops below 40 degrees. Then return them when it's milder. ☀

HAVE A HOLLY, JOLLY CHRISTMAS

Cut branches of deciduous holly make excellent holiday decorations both inside and out. They offer bold color and last a long time. Branches of 'Winter Gold' winterberry (below) decorate the bar at the home of Jon Carloftis in Lexington, Kentucky. To grow your own, remember that possumhaw and winterberry come as either male or female plants, and only females produce berries. So you need to plant at least one male pollinator for however many females you have. For possumhaw, try 'Red Escort.' For winterberry, choose 'Southern Gentleman.'



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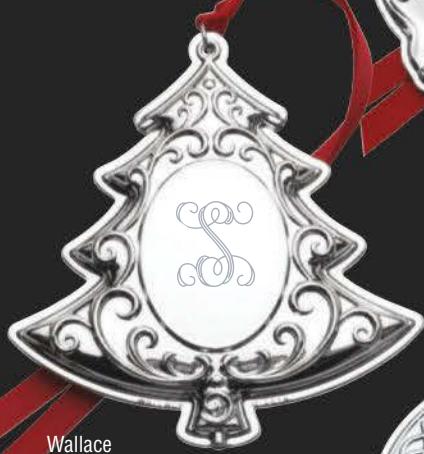
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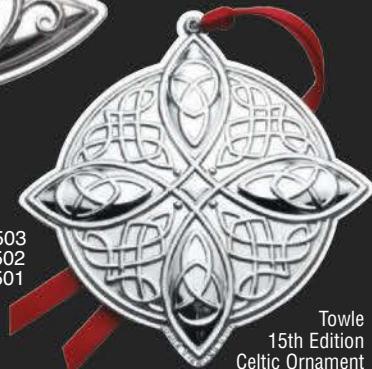
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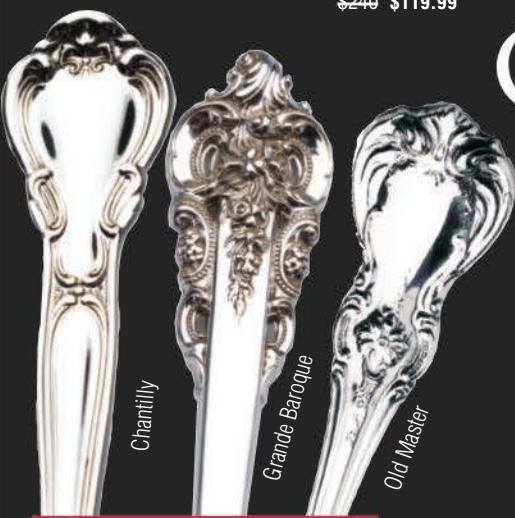
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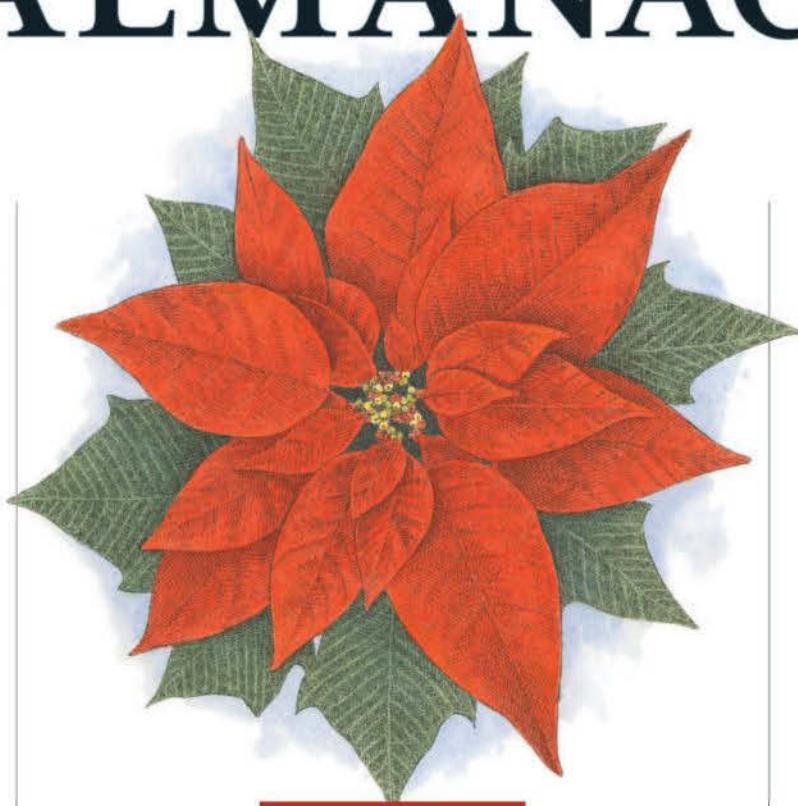


- Upper South USDA ZONE 6
- Middle South USDA ZONE 7
- Lower South USDA ZONE 8
- Coastal South USDA ZONE 9
- Tropical South USDA ZONE 10

DECEMBER CHECKLIST

BUY A LIVE TREE

Give a gift to yourself—buy a live tree for Christmas, and plant it in your yard after the holidays to improve your landscaping. In the Upper and Middle South, choose a Fraser fir, white pine, Scotch pine, or hemlock. In the Lower and Coastal South, pick a Virginia pine, Eastern red cedar, or holly. You can display your tree inside or outside. Place it on your porch or near an entry point such as a gate. Dress up your tree for the season by wrapping the container in burlap or placing it in a large galvanized bucket. Keep your tree well watered. You can use it indoors for 7 to 10 days.



POINSETTIA (EUPHORBIA PULCHERRIMA)

Let bright blooms of poinsettias illuminate your holidays. This classic flower comes in reds, pinks, and whites. When buying a plant, limit exposure to the cold if transporting it in your car. Inside your home, put the plant in a warm location with bright, indirect light.

Avoid placing near heating vents or cold drafts. Water when the top layer of the soil feels slightly dry. Do not let plants sit in saucers of water. Poinsettias also make great cut flowers if you snip the stems.

BEST POINSETTIAS FOR CUTTING

1. 'Lemon Drop'
2. 'Strawberries 'N Cream'
3. Winter Rose series

ADD MULCH

The winter solstice occurs on December 21, marking the end of fall and the beginning of winter. Evergreens such as azaleas, camellias, boxwoods, and hollies will appreciate a little extra protection from the cold, drying winds ahead. Add a 2-inch layer of pine straw or shredded pine bark mulch to help conserve moisture.

GROW AMARYLLIS

Force bulbs into bloom for some of the showiest flowers of the season. Choose a pot slightly larger than the bulb. Plant in a lightweight potting mix, and leave about one-third of the bulb above the soil level. Place in bright, indirect light, and keep the soil slightly moist. In a hurry? Purchase bulbs already potted and growing. Buy at your local nursery or from whiteflowerfarm.com. ■

COOL FIND!

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Use these lightweight pruners to clip branches for the holidays. ARS Hand Pruner, \$31.22; woodavenue.com

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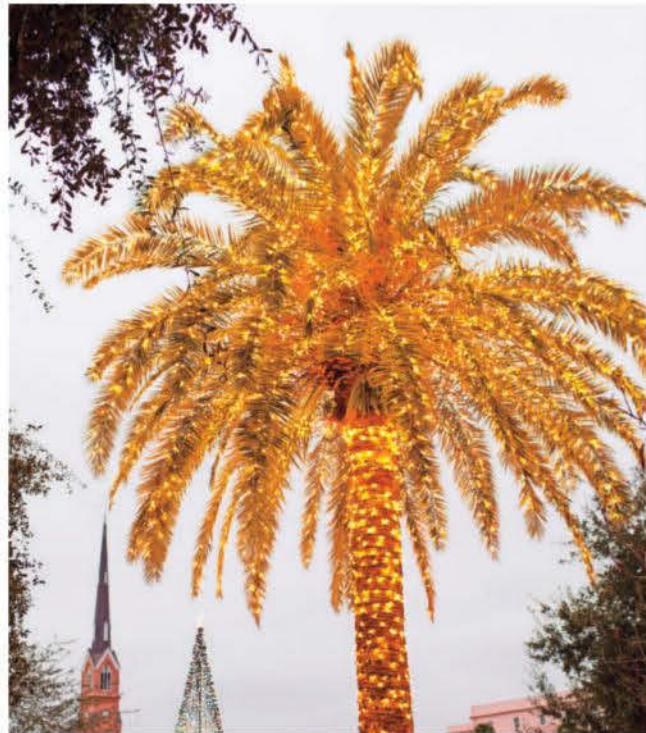
Holidays in the Holy City

In Charleston, South Carolina, Christmas is celebrated with pecan roasts aplenty, bourbon-spiked eggnog, and loads of antebellum charm. It's time to deck the halls, Lowcountry-style





LEFT: Ann Caldwell & The Magnolia Singers at Drayton Hall



while gas lamps flicker into the winter nights. As the year comes to a close with plenty of frothy eggnog (and just a bit of bourbon), Charleston rolls out its finest for locals and visitors alike.

No Southern locale hosts the holidays quite like the Holy City. A seasonal sampling of only-in-Charleston experiences begins here, from stately mansions trimmed in Victorian frill to carriage rides between cocktails in world-class watering holes. When it comes to a one-of-a-kind way to toast the year, this belle of Southern cities does it her own way.

Eat

The **Charleston Holiday Progressive Dinner** is the most quintessential of Christmas traditions. The nightly meals are a multiple-course affair, with diners transported to each site via old-fashioned carriage. Evenings begin at **Kings**

Courtyard Inn (kingscourtyardinn.com), where guests sip hot, spiced cinnamon-apple cider and pomegranate eggnog. Then on to **Circa 1886** (circa1886.com), a graceful and beloved restaurant inside the Wentworth Mansion, for a grand holiday meal of sweet potato soup, arugula salad, and roasted beef

tenderloin or grilled Loch Duart salmon. Wind down, and warm up, with a trio of Southern desserts and coffee in the ballroom at the **John Rutledge House Inn** on Broad Street; it's a grandiose place where a bygone era comes alive. Dinners start on November 28 and continue through December

SEERSUCKER HAS LONG turned to tweed, snow-white and candy cane-striped camellias are in bloom, and oyster-roast season is in full swing.

All around the historic peninsula, friends gather on piazzas strung with garland

23 (\$100/person).
johnrutledgehouseinn.com

On Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, the plush, velvet-walled dining room of **Peninsula Grill** is the perfect place to savor a meal by acclaimed chef Graham Dailey. Expect white tablecloths and a holiday-size helping of Christmas cheer. Chef Graham and his crew serve up a prix fixe menu of winter fare, but the real treat comes by way of the oh-so-delectable and utterly indulgent 12-layer coconut cake. \$60; peninsulagrill.com

Stay

During the holidays, one local classic (and a *Southern Living* Hotel Collection property) really does it right. **Wentworth Mansion**, a 21-room boutique hotel originally built in the 1880s, dresses to the nines. The foyer is spruced up in wreaths and trees, mantels are draped in greenery, and most rooms feature a roaring fireplace, just right for a cozy night in. Take advantage of the Winter Weekday

Special (for *Southern Living* readers only) with rates from \$329. Call to reserve (888/466-1886) and ask for special ASKDECSL. wentworthmansion.com

Peninsula Grill's decadent 12-layer coconut cake





Find classic clothing and furnishings on King Street.

Shop

Stock up on holiday gifts while strolling along King Street.

Finicky Filly, owned by mother-daughter duo Judy Casey and Rebecca Steinberg, features designers

including Lela Rose and Tory Burch, plus jewelry by artists such as Ela Rae and Julie Vos. thefinickyfilly.com

Ben Silver is a one-stop shop for the well-dressed man. The store's silk

ties embellished with bedecked Christmas trees are conversation starters (\$145), and the boutique's silver-plated or 18-karat gold cuff links are an heirloom-worthy gift to tuck into a stocking (from \$185). bensilver.com

With its giant gum-ball machine and mini Ferris wheel, **Magnifilous Toy Emporium** has quickly become a hit with Charleston children. We love the Lowcountry-designed and made toys, such as wooden puzzles and Munch Stix (jointed chopsticks for kids). magnifilous.com

Do

Charleston Strolls offers a Holiday Walking Tour with in-the-know Charlestonians as guides, providing local knowledge of the city's most festive spots. Explore along the Battery, where wreaths welcome visitors in grand Southern style, through neighborhoods known for their decked-out decor, and to **The Mills House** hotel's Christmas tree that stands tall in front of a garland-draped staircase. \$19; charlestonstrolls.com

Each year historic **Drayton Hall** hosts a

Spirituals Concert (\$45; draytonhall.org) with Ann Caldwell & The Magnolia Singers. The a capella trio has made a name

by singing to preserve the tradition of early Southern music and the South Carolina Gullah culture. 

The American Theater, a King Street landmark



CHRISTMAS ALL THROUGH THE SOUTH

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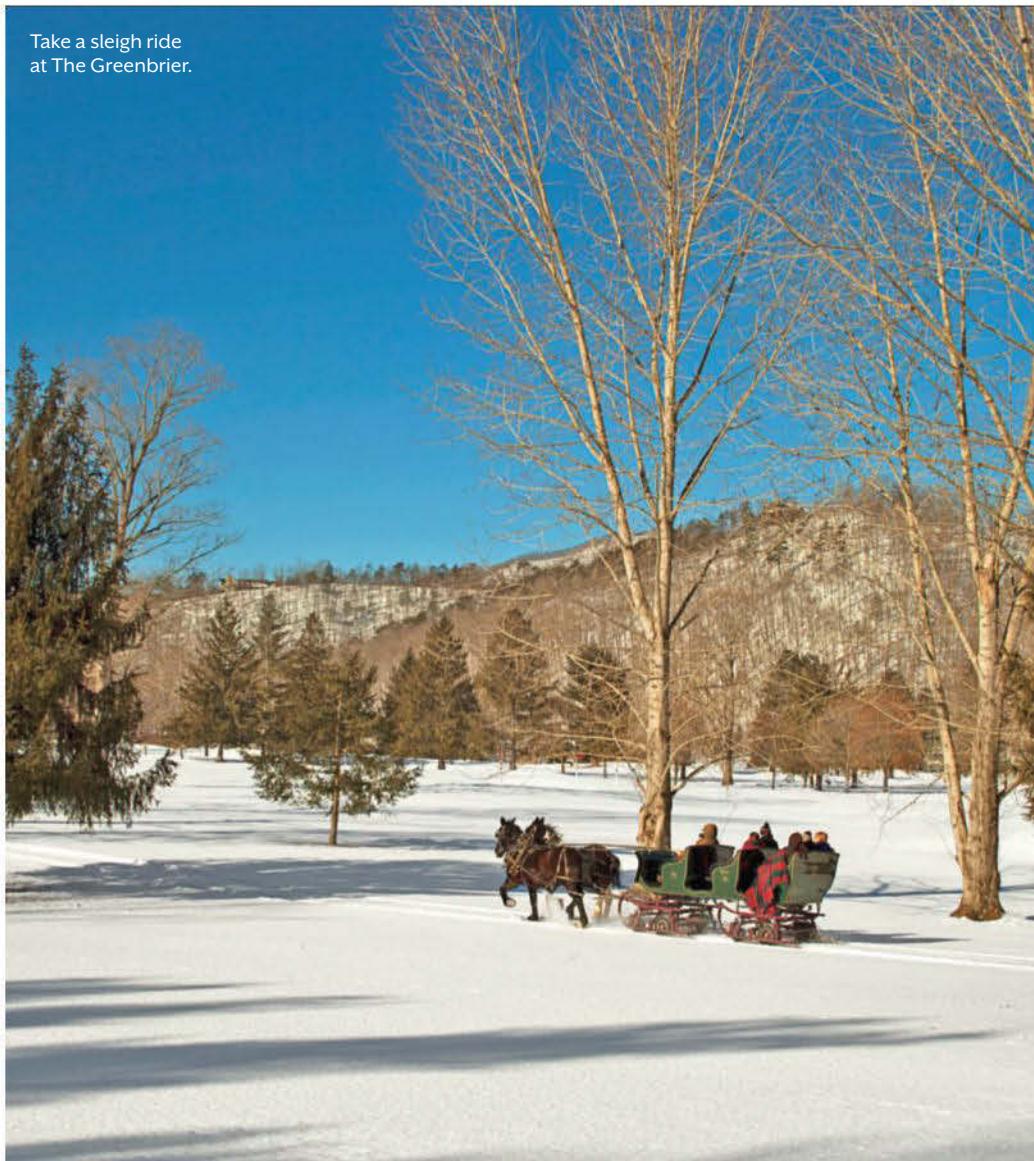
The pages of our latest coffee-table book, *Christmas All Through the South* (out now), celebrate the beauty, flavor, and timeless traditions that many *Southern Living* photographers have captured through the years—think decadent red velvet cake, grand historic estates, and charming front porches. \$26; amazon.com





SEE OUR HOLIDAY MUST-DO LIST
at southernliving.com/merry

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at The Greenbrier.



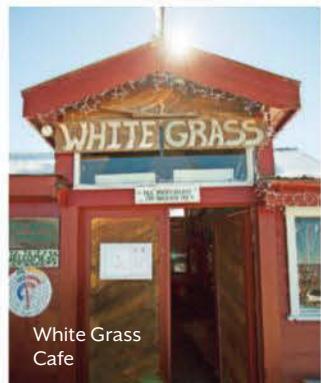
A Snow Country Road Trip

This gorgeous drive winds you through the heart of the mountainous South. From sleigh rides to hot chocolate, it's the perfect family trip to take this winter

BARBECUE AND SWEET TEA ARE

ubiquitous in the South, but snow can be a bit more elusive. The mild winters are part of the charm of living below the Mason-Dixon, but a proper powdery experience can still be found.

Case in point: the South's very own snowbelt, a string of mountains in West Virginia that typically receives 160 inches of snow a year from December to March. This three-day road trip brings you through those frozen hills.



DAY 1

THOMAS, WEST VIRGINIA

Thomas is a former coal town that's found new life as a winter sports destination for the non-Olympic adventurers among us. Dive headfirst into the snow at the sledding hill at **Blackwater Falls State Park** (blackwaterfalls.com), which is lit for night sledding. Make sure to rent toboggans at the Warming Hut.

While in the state park, take the short stroll to the 60-foot-tall Blackwater Falls, often frozen in winter. Indulge in some après-sled shopping at **Buxton & Landstreet Gallery & Studios** (304/657-4572) in the former Davis Coal and Coke Company store, where you'll find work from Appalachian-based artists. (The perfume bottles by glass artist Ron Hinkle would make great Christmas gifts.) Head into Canaan Valley for dinner at **White Grass Cafe** (whitegrass.com). You can't go wrong with one of the soups—we suggest the andouille sausage stew. Grab a room at **Cooper House Bed & Cocktail** (cooperhousebandc.com; from \$90), a new hotel on Thomas' main road with just four rooms. If you have enough energy, walk next door to catch a show at **The Purple Fiddle** (purplefiddle.com), a tiny bluegrass venue.

HOLIDAYS

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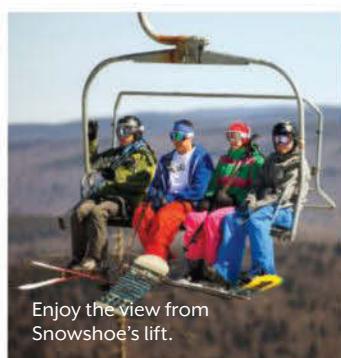
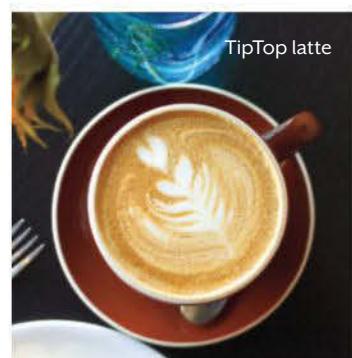
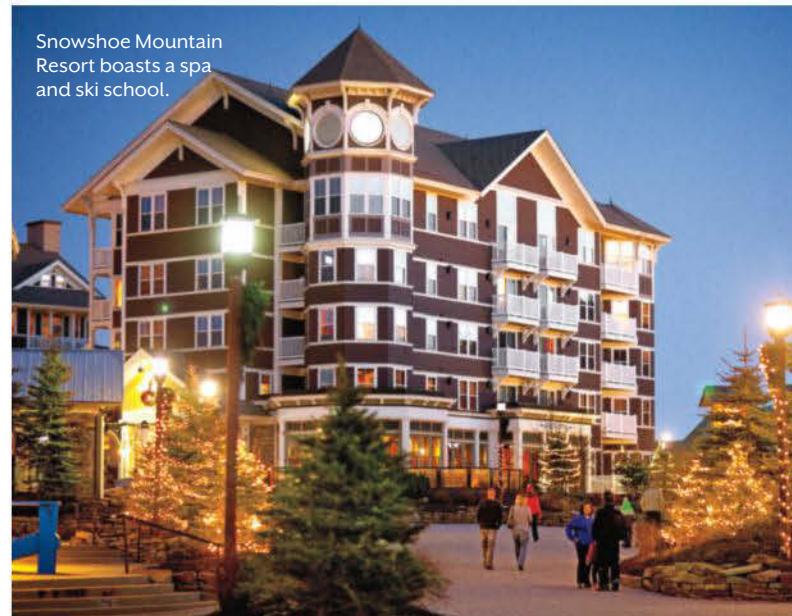
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DAY 2
THOMAS TO SNOWSHOE

Distance: 93 miles

Wake up with steaming hot coffee and a flaky pastry from **TipTop** (tiptopthomas.com)—we suggest the coconut custard-filled mini brioche donut. Then drive two hours to **Snowshoe Mountain Resort** (snowshoemtn.com), where you'll find a cobblestone-lined mountaintop village and the most skiable terrain below the Mason-Dixon. Snowshoe's ski school is guaranteed to safely get you down

the hill smiling. The reason lies in its method of teaching: The resort is an early adopter of the progressive Terrain Based Learning system, which eases new skiers and boarders into the sport using basic snow features designed to remove the potential stress of learning how to ski. No more zooming down the hill while an instructor yells "Snowplow!" at you. After mastering the mountain, wrap your hands around a warm cup of hot chocolate (\$3) at **The Boathouse** (304/572-5746), a slopeside restaurant at the base of the Ballhooter Lift overlooking Shavers Lake.

For a more relaxing experience, head to the new **Spa at Snowshoe**

(304/572-4700) in the heart of the village, where a Hot Stone Massage (\$175 for 90 minutes) will make you forget about the freezing temps outside. Be sure to carve out three hours at the end of the day for a 2-mile off-road tour, deep into the backcountry, to a multi-course dinner at the **Sunrise Backcountry Hut** (from \$219/couple). Expect winter favorites such as beef stew and pecan-encrusted tilapia, washed down by local beer, in this rustic cabin surrounded by evergreens. At the end of the night, curl up in front of your own fireplace at the brand-new **Corduroy Inn** (corduroyinn.com; from \$169), which offers a boutique experience at the top of the mountain.

DAY 3

SNOWSHOE TO THE GREENBRIER

Distance: 79 miles

After breakfast at the hotel, head south down the mountain toward arty Lewisburg, a small rural town known for its galleries. On the way, make a pit stop at **Smooth Ambler Spirits** (smoothambler.com), a bustling craft distillery just outside of town. The distillery has a range of popular bourbons, but we like its Greenbrier Gin, which uses locally sourced water, grain, and botanicals for a supremely mixable gin that packs a citrus punch. In downtown Lewisburg, finish your holiday shopping at **Bella The Corner Gourmet**

(bellathecornergourmet.com), where you can pick up a locally made black mustard called The Pig Cave, along with Smooth Ambler bourbon balls: chocolate-covered, whiskey-infused caramels. Have them wrapped immediately so you're not tempted to keep them for yourself.

Pop into **Harmony Ridge Gallery** (harmonyridgegallery.com), which is packed with modern furniture and bold art, from whimsical Papaya! bags to colorful coolers made from recycled 44-gallon oil drums—guaranteed conversation starters at your next BBQ. Bonus: This gallery also has a wine bar. Grab lunch downtown at the **Stardust Cafe** (stardustcafewv.com), where The Naked Burger (locally grown, grass-fed beef topped with bacon,

avocado, and just about everything else on a homemade bun; \$11.95) is practically mandatory. Finish the trip at **The Greenbrier** (greenbrier.com; rooms from \$244), which goes all-out with Christmas decorations. (They spent a cool million last year on lights alone!)

Spend some time lounging in the stately lobby, or simply wander the classic resort. Then rent a pair of skates and take a few spins on the massive outdoor ice rink (\$16), or go full Bing Crosby and take an old-fashioned sleigh ride through The Greenbrier's expansive grounds (\$48/person). Cap off the trip with a long, relaxing soak in one of The Greenbrier's signature sulfur tubs (\$50/25 minutes), which will work out all of the kinks from sledding and skiing over the weekend. ☀



The Greenbrier's welcoming hallways

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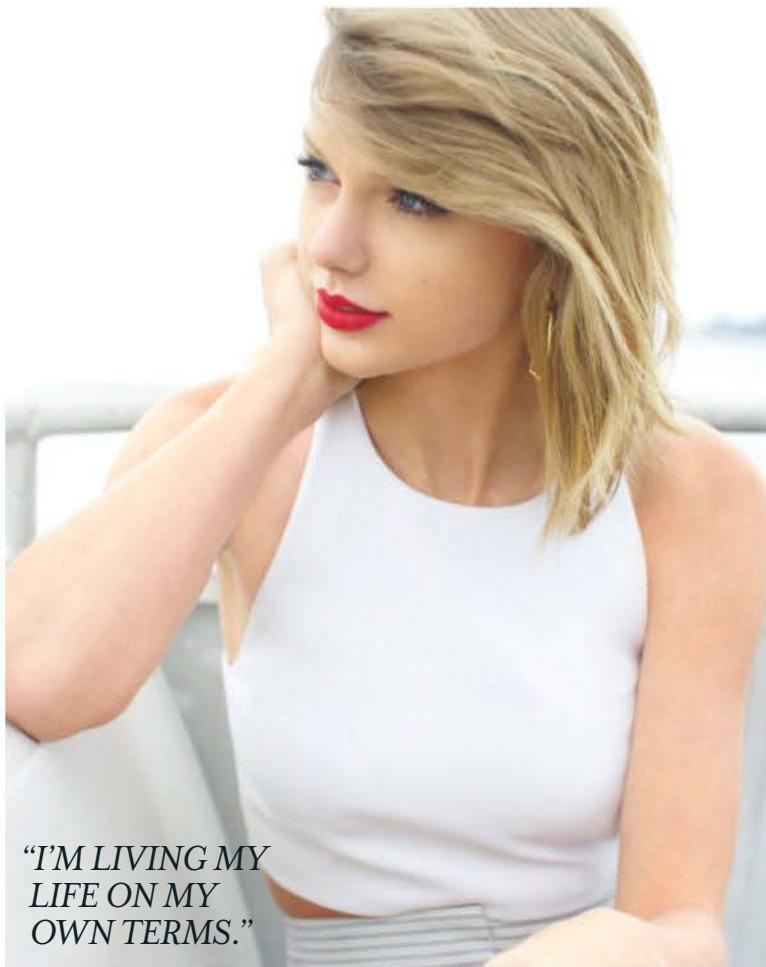
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Taylor Swift

HOME BASE: Nashville and New York **OCCUPATION:** Singer/songwriter **WHAT'S ON HER PLATE:** Promoting her latest album, *1989*, and turning 25 on December 13. **DREAM DUET:** "Chris Martin or Joni Mitchell—but I think so highly of them, I'd never want to ask."



"I'M LIVING MY LIFE ON MY OWN TERMS."

I think the open-mindedness of Nashville is what made me feel like I could take a chance and make a [pop] album this time around. I didn't feel like [locals] would turn their back on me, and thankfully they haven't. Nashville is a melting pot of musical influences and experimentation. There's an innate overall friendliness: It feels more like a neighborhood than a town or a city.

I very rarely let myself geek out over cooking in interviews, but I feel like *[Southern Living]* is a great place for that. I am one of those cooks who always likes to tackle something new. My friends and I made a really, really epic apple pie, and my friend Emma gave me this tip to crush up graham crackers in the bottom of the pie crust, under the apples. It adds a sugary-cookie-crunch kind of texture.

My number one excitement factor with Christmas is watching my family open up gifts. I love searching for the perfect gift—and the perfect wrapping paper—for each person in my life. Some people are born to be excited about opening gifts, some people are born to be excited about giving gifts. The good thing about humanity is that we seem to balance out.

In the last couple of years I've experienced this sort of independence renaissance. I am obsessed with being a good friend, a good sister, a good daughter, and devoting my attention to the people that really are closest to me. I'm living my life on my own terms.

I recommend to all my friends that they be alone for a while. When you're in love, or dating someone, you filter your life decisions through

their eyes. When you spend a few years being who you are, completely unbiased, you can figure out what you actually want.

A red lip is my one go-to style. Sometimes I don't even put any other makeup on—just a red lip and maybe some mascara. Every day that I go to the gym it's documented by a minimum of 20 photographers. I've read reports

that I've taken hours to get ready after I work out. It's so funny that they chalked it up to me doing a whole glam thing—very flattering, but very very untrue.

In the South, there's something lyrical about the way we speak. I like little throwaway phrases; it's wordplay. I was in England and said, "If you chase two rabbits, you'll lose them both." They had never heard that, but I hear things like that all the time in Nashville.

My mom has always taught me to prepare. Train yourself to make plans, and then you very rarely have to get stressed out. [But] there are so many things that you could never even begin to prepare for—those things you have to just let go.

I don't ever feel lonely when I'm alone, because I have a lot of little things that make me happy. I love coming home to my cats. I love watching *Friends* marathons late at night or dropping into a Google or Wikipedia rabbit hole and learning things about the history of whatever.

I feel very lucky to say that my life is full of really intelligent and passionate women. The one common thread among all my closest girlfriends is individuality and my ability to trust them. There's an Ernest Hemingway quote that says, "The best way to find out if you can trust somebody is to trust them." That's how I live my life, but at the same time, it's important to surround yourself with people who have proven that trust over and over again. ☀

*Taylor
born in 1989*



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This month **ALLISON GLOCK** is spending Christmas in Los Angeles, where there is no indication that it is Christmas at all.



Giving Presence

In the Appalachian Christmases of my youth, having less meant giving more

M

Y WEST VIRGINIA grandparents were not people of means. They came from a long line of pottery workers, and as such, luxuries remained the province of catalogs and television programs.

This necessary parsimony extended to Christmas. My great-grandfather, who lived down the street from my grandparents, bragged that when he was a child, he would receive an orange for the holiday. My grandmother managed a bit better, allowing

her grandchildren to select one item from her modest collection of costume jewelry. Sometimes she'd let us choose a piece of decorative pottery that her own daddy had made, a miniature swan or a pony with gold paint on his hooves. For his part, my grandfather would tell a story. He'd imagine the most fanciful world he could, fill it with tigers and flying elephants, and give us the gift of fantasy. On holidays we would mostly sing and play cards, teasing and ribbing each other into the wee hours.

A few years back I stopped giving my daughters presents that can be wrapped.

THOUGH MY GRANDPARENTS HAD VERY LITTLE, WHAT THEY GAVE ME LASTED A LIFETIME

I'd become mildly depressed at the proliferation of senseless stuff, watching Christmas morning as my kids tore through box after box, barely pausing to register what they'd been given. When it was all over, there would be stacks of meaningless things, excess that made me feel guilty and did not reflect the values my grandparents instilled in me.

Thus was born the West Virginia Christmas! I sat the girls down and told them about their great-grandparents. How though they had very little, what they gave me lasted a lifetime. I explained that this was to be the last season of surplus. Moving forward they would be allowed to choose an experience for their single Christmas present. This could be a concert, a road trip, camping in the backyard—anything that couldn't be tied up with a blasted bow. Neither flinched. In fact, they grew excited about what adventure they were going to pick.

In the holidays that followed, we visited alligator farms, Dalí exhibits, and chocolate factories. One winter break we even went to London, swapping our house with that of a family there. That Christmas Eve we took a walk and stumbled upon a historic stone church. It was starting to rain, so we sought refuge inside, where a full choir and congregation were singing. We shook off our coats, squeezed into a pew, found a hymnal, and began to warble along.

I remember looking down the row, observing my husband and children pink-cheeked and alight. Even amidst the triumphant swell, their voices stood out to my ear. "My grandparents would have loved this," I whispered to my husband, who took my hand. My mind traveled back to those Christmases in West Virginia, my family playing gin rummy and laughing around the kitchen table, my grandparents so happy with so little, teaching me that no matter what the day, being present is present enough. ■



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READY TO Holiday



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something for
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SOUTHERN LIVING HOLIDAY

GIFT GUIDE

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/// photographs by BECKY LUIGART-STAYNER /// styling by BILL LAUGHLIN ///



SPOIL THEM

**TREASURES FOR LOVED ONES
WHO HAVE BEEN
EXTRA GOOD THIS YEAR**

1 CABLE-KNIT SWEATER His-and-hers cashmere. \$325-\$350; annmashburn.com; sidmashburn.com

2 THE EDISTO OYSTER KNIFE Heirloom-worthy piece designed for *Southern Living* readers. \$300; williamsknife.com

3 PKS CULTIVATOR & TROWEL SET Garden tools they'll want to display. \$128; shopterrain.com

4 CHOCOLATE LOVER LARGE PECANS Handpicked and dipped in chocolate. \$70/six 12-ounce bags; schermer-pecans.myshopify.com

5 MOSCOW MULE COPPER CUPS A must for the home bar. \$100/ set of four; barnlightelectric.com

6 ROBINSON NUTCRACKER A chic (and handy) table accent. \$95; toryburch.com

7 TECH RING Syncs up with phones for discreet alerts. \$195-\$260; ringly.com Reader deal! 25% off with code **SL2014**

8 QUEEN CITY PIE SAFE For the baker who travels in style. \$249.99; jacobbromwell.com

Reader deal! 10% off with code **JB10**

9 15-YEAR BOURBON BARREL STAVE BOWL This is a guaranteed hit for bourbon enthusiasts. \$155; pappyco.com

10 SARATOGA PENDANT Delicate and available in four colors. \$325/each; julievos.com Reader deal! 20% off with code **SL2014**

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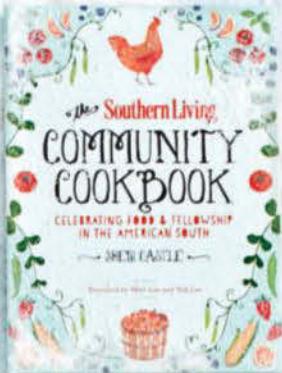


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- ② **CHRISTMAS ALL THROUGH THE SOUTH** Cheer for the coffee table. \$40; amazon.com
- ③ **COMMUNITY COOKBOOK** Homespun recipes for the SL lover. \$29.95; amazon.com
- ④ **LOGE WEDGE PAN** Crispy-crust fans, rejoice! \$22.99; crackerbarrel.com Reader deal! 20% off with code **SLCB2014**
- ⑤ **LITTLE GREY OWL COAT** Fun for tykes. \$155; littlegoodall.com Reader deal! 20% off with code **SL2014**
- ⑥ **BOURBON & BACON** An ode to a great pair. \$22.95; amazon.com
- ⑦ **NEEDLEPOINT BELT** Hand-stitched in Alabama. \$130/each; asherriley.com Reader deal! 20% off with code **BELTS20**
- ⑧ **POCKET SQUARE** A dapper suit addition. \$45/each; ledbury.com Reader deal! 20% off with code **SLGIFT**
- ⑨ **MONOGRAM CUFF BRACELET** Monogramming is included. \$69/each; exvotovintage.com
- ⑩ **ELLA MAE BREAD BOARD** This brand employs homeless craftsmen. \$45; lamonluther.com
- ⑪ **VINTAGE THERMOS TOTE** A wintry tote with room to spare. \$62; crabberrie.com Reader deal! 20% off with code **SL2014**
- ⑫ **THE MAGNOLIA COMPANY MAGNOLIA TREE** A gift that keeps on growing. \$44; seedsoflife.com Reader deal! 20% off with code **SL2014**
- ⑬ **ROLL UP SHAVE KIT** Made-to-order in Texas. \$172.50; whitewinglabel.com Reader deal! 20% off with code **SLGIFT**
- ⑭ **ONCE UPON A HIVE: THE BOOK OF HONEY** No need to wrap this sweet set that comes with nine types of honey. \$59.95; savannahbee.com
- ⑮ **FRENCH STYLE ROLLING PIN** Customization available. \$47; richwoodcreations.etsy.com





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5



6



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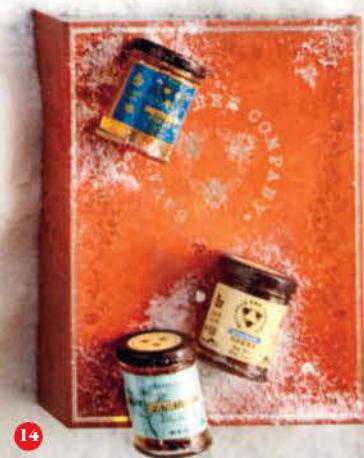
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3 THE PENCIL FACTORY PENCIL SET Give these to your favorite artist. \$13/set; hesterandcook.com

4 BOTTLE WRENCH BOTTLE OPENER For the handyman who loves a cold brew. From \$6; www.thebottlewrench.com

5 PETITE NOTES Fun for list making. \$10/each; sugarpaper.com

6 RED CHECKED BOW TIE Elastic band for tots. \$12.99; smockedauCTIONS.com

7 SEA SALT & VINEGAR CARMELS Tennessee sweets. \$19.99/24-count box; oliveandsinclair.com

8 DAUVILLE SINGLE STEM BUD VASE Tuck holly branches inside. \$25; canvashomestore.com

9 E.L.F. 10-PIECE NAIL POLISH SET Fill stockings with these

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10 ZKANO SOCKS Punchy colors from an Alabama mill. \$15-\$17/pair; zkano.com

11 FIELD GUIDE Cities include Austin, Nashville, and New Orleans. \$17.95/each; wildsam.com

12 LUCIA GUEST SOAP BOX Eight fab scents. \$17.50; stylevisa.com

13 STAG BOTTLE STOPPER Bring to dinner with a bottle of wine. \$24; cwonder.com Reader deal! 20% off with code **SLHOLIDAY**



START A NEW TRADITION

UPDATES ON TIME-TESTED WAYS
TO BRING THE FAMILY TOGETHER

Ⓐ MOVIE NIGHT

LORIENT LONG PAJAMA SET IN ROSE SNOWFLAKE [1] The pj's come in several prints for all the ladies of the house. \$132; marigotcollection.com **SMARTPHONE PROJECTOR [2]** Show a drive-in style movie from your phone. \$27; uncommongoods.com **VINTAGE THROW [3]** Curl up with a soft, brushed-wool tartan blanket. \$120; schoolhouseelectric.com **RUBY RED POPCORN [4]** Get the party poppin' with this hull-less popcorn. \$4/1 pound of kernels; lovelandacrespopcorn.com **GONE WITH THE WIND DVD [5]** Frankly, my dear, we wouldn't dream of missing the film's 75th anniversary. \$37.52; barnesandnoble.com **BUNNY WILLIAMS SILVER WIRE CACHEPOT [6]** It's more than just a pretty way to hold your ice cream; the liner acts as a coaster and catches any drips. \$59; ballarddesigns.com



Ⓑ GAMES & COCKTAILS

NAVY DIAMOND BACKGAMMON SET [1] Grab a partner and get ahead in the count with this stylish set you won't want to hide in the game closet. \$198; serenaandlily.com **KATE SPADE NEW YORK HIS & HER'S DOUBLE OLD FASHIONED GLASSES [2]** This classic set of cocktail glasses is a clever gift for newlyweds. \$49.99/set of two; bedbathandbeyond.com **SOUTHERN BELLE NOVELTY SMOKING SLIPPER [3]** Perfect for keeping toes toasty while lounging around the house. \$148; cwonder.com **Reader deal! 20% off with code SHOLIDAY** **BOURBON COCKTAIL CHERRIES [4]** An Old Fashioned essential from our favorite Lowcountry cocktail supplier. \$16; jackrudycocktailco.com **MGCO DECK [5]** Add a dash of color to your game with these Kentucky-made cards. \$15/each; misc-goods-co.myshopify.com **Reader Deal! 20% off with code M GSL20**

Ⓒ BAKING COOKIES

KIDS RED STRIPE APRON SET [1] Include little cooks in the action with this cotton set that includes a mitt and three wooden utensils. \$45; odettewilliams.com **MOSSEY GLASS 3-PIECE MIXING BOWL SET IN JADEITE [2]** Inspired by vintage glassware molds and made to last. \$65; food52.com **STARRY NIGHT CHRISTMAS TREE COPPER COOKIE CUTTER [3]** This Florida-made copper cutter is an instant heirloom. \$24; michaelbonne.etsy.com





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It's time for our Great Big Christmas Giveaway. From November 1 to December 25, we'll be giving away special items, including some featured right here in the gift guide.

For details, visit southernliving.com/gifts

Presented by Tervis



Make a splash at your entry by offering a sneak peek of your tree decor. Turn the page to see how to make these golden palm fronds.

GARLANDS, TREES & WREATHS *OH MY!*

THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO THE HOLY TRINITY OF HOLIDAY DECORATING

WRITTEN BY
ZOE GOWEN

PHOTOGRAPHS BY
HECTOR SANCHEZ

PRODUCED BY
BUFFY HARGETT MILLER
& **ELLY POSTON**

We've been readying you for the holidays since 1966. In those 48 years, we've trimmed a forest of trees, strung runways of garland, and hung countless wreaths. Through it all, we've tried and tested every idea imaginable. Our gift to you this year? A high-style, low-fuss approach to wreaths, trees, and garlands—the “big three” of Christmas decorating—plus a toolbox packed with everything you'll *really* need to pull it together. We promise to have you and your home all ready soon so you can relax and enjoy the season.

Our favorite tree?
The Fraser fir.
Native to the
South, it's fragrant,
boasts the ideal
shape, and has
soft needles.



THE TREE

THE BIG IDEA: Take inspiration from the surrounding landscape to infuse your tree with festive spirit and local flavor. The setting for this tree is Sullivan's Island, South Carolina, and that shows proudly with a profusion of palm fronds, oyster shell accents, and a palette of gold, burnt orange, and chartreuse that matches the interior. Tweak the look to suit your own home.



Ornaments

The key to a perfectly imperfect-looking tree? A smartly curated mix of ornaments. We advise a five-type formula: three sizes of balls in shades that coordinate with your chosen palette, a star shape for edge, and a few one-of-a-kind ornaments for a collected, personal feel. Select ornaments in an array of reflective finishes to bounce light around the room and give the tree a layered, sparkly look.



Gift Tag

Rather than buying all your packaging supplies, forage for creative materials. Here, oyster shells reference the coastal location and are easy to get in December from local seafood markets. Wash them with soap and water, brush the edges with gold paint, and then hot-glue them to the gift. Finish the natural look with faux-bois wrapping paper and a sprig from the tree. Landlocked? Label presents with pinecones or leaves.



Star Ornament

We all have the ornaments that we look forward to pulling out year after year. These are the pieces that give our trees personality. They can be either fine collected objects or priceless handmade ones. Hang these from the tree with notice-me, extra-long felt ribbon so they will stand out from the others. If they are weighty, hang them 3 to 4 inches back from the tip of the branch to keep them secure.

THE SHOWSTOPPER



TOPPING A TREE

WHILE BIGGER IS ALWAYS BETTER in holiday decor, we say "biggest and homemade" is the best. Here, we picked palm fronds from the yard, spray-painted them gold, and wired them to the tree. Next, we created two oversize bows (one for each side of the tree) with two different ribbons and attached them at the base of the fronds. To incorporate tradition, we nestled a classic star into the topper. If fronds aren't available, try magnolia foliage or plain branches.



TRIMMINGS

Every tree needs a garland that snakes its way from top to bottom and focuses attention on your ornament mix. Avoid high-shine tinsel, and try a more subtle 12-inch ribbon that's wrapped horizontally around the branch ends. Gold fronds and gilded faux berry branches add extra dimension.



LIGHTS

As with the ornaments, choose lights in assorted shapes and sizes. We doubled up and used a combo of classic white twinkle lights and larger round cafe lights to add brightness without having to wrap each branch. Start at the top, and wind down with one set. Then repeat with the second set.

THE GARLAND

THE BIG IDEA: We started with plain boxwood throughout the house because it's beautiful on its own and won't shed like other greenery. Our boxwood of choice comes from North Carolina's Gardens of the Blue Ridge (gardensoftheblueridge.com). As the season progresses or if we're hosting a special party, we dress up the garland with ribbons, fruits, and flowers. This method will work for any type of greenery.



DOORWAY

With so much traffic, keep doors simple with a crisp swag over the top, accented with trailing ribbons and ornaments. To best secure the garland, hang it with nails placed right above the molding to minimize visible holes. Cut different lengths of ribbon, string the balls, and knot the lengths together before attaching to one side of the door frame. Repeat on the other side.

Mantel

A fireplace is a natural focal point, so adorn it accordingly with a single swag, letting the ends trail to the floor. Early in the season, hang basic boxwood with ribbons, dried hydrangeas, faux crabapples, and silver brunia berries. When company's coming, add white roses, lilies, and fresh hydrangeas in florist water picks (secured with florist wire) along the center.



THE SHOWSTOPPER

CLIMBING THE STAIRS

SET AN ELEGANT TONE with a cascade of boxwood and ribbon that attaches to the banister with coated wire and chenille stems to prevent scratching. For more formal events, dress up the garland by creating an arrangement of fresh hydrangeas, succulents, and seeded eucalyptus in a florist foam cage. Finish the spray with a bow and trailing Champagne-colored ornaments. Then wire the cage to the banister.





Our golden rule of garland: Always let each end fall all the way to the floor. To ensure the right length, measure your mantel's height and width before shopping.



THE WREATHS

THE BIG IDEA: The only formula we follow for wreaths is to experiment. Here, we embellished premade wreaths and filled do-it-yourself wreath forms with foraged evergreen clippings to make several options that can hang in just about any room in your house. Here are six of our favorite ideas that you can make all your own.

THE SHOWSTOPPER

AS A CENTERPIECE

GIVE THE HANGING WREATH a break, and incorporate one into your table setting. Here, we spruced up a boxwood wreath with succulents, eucalyptus sprigs, and gold ribbon and placed a grouping of mismatched green candles in the center. If guests are coming, add a few fresh white tulips to the wreath with florist water picks and light the candles. Because this is a low arrangement, dinner-party conversations will flow easily all night.



THE DAPPER DEER

Start with cypress clippings stuffed into a chicken wire wreath form. Then cut the

wreath in half with wire clippers to place over the deer's head. Wire the wreath back together, and cover the cut area with a bow. Finish the look with ball ornaments strung from the antlers.



Organic

Using three different kinds of moss from a crafts store and some florist U-pins, attach the moss to a florist foam or plastic foam wreath form. Vary the mosses while pinning for an authentic garden-like feel. At the bottom, secure a spray of fresh berries and pine from the yard. Then place a homemade bow off-center for a more casual appearance.



Modern

For a cheery retro look, start with a grapevine wreath (we painted ours white) and hot-glue classic round Christmas ornaments in a single color but different shades and sizes. When gluing, adhere the balls to both the wreath and one another for extra hold. Although this wreath makes a big statement, it's lightweight enough to be hung from a stick-on hook.



Double Stack

This presentation elevates pre-made grocery-store wreaths. They hang from fishing line that runs over the top of the door. Then, striped ribbon trails the fishing line. This allows the wreaths to move a bit, giving them a striking, free-hanging look. Sprays of fresh bay leaves, seeded eucalyptus, and large gray berzillia berries add tone-on-tone interest and texture.



Traditional

Every home needs a touch of red and green during the holidays. This year, we freshened the typical motif with a shapely wreath made from real Granny Smith apples wired to a florist foam wreath form with florist picks. Red hypericum berries and bay leaves fill out the rest of the wreath. The apples do make this wreath weighty, so hang it from a sturdy nail.

THE WELL-APPOINTED HOLIDAY TOOLBOX

Outside the frame of all of these photos stands Buffy Hargett Miller, the stylist who turns our Christmas ideas into a photogenic reality. Right beside her is a well-organized, fully stocked kit of essentials that she needs to pull it all together. We convinced her to open her toolbox and show us *everything* you will need to re-create these looks—from her scissors to her preferred florist picks.

①
GREEN ANCHOR TAPE
1/4 Inch, \$11.99;
michaelsfloralsupply.com

②
GREEN FLORIST WIRE
22 Gauge, \$1.99; michaels.com

③
FLORIST SHEARS
Red (22UN14), \$13.97;
grainger.com

④
SELF-ADHESIVE HOOKS
Ook, \$1.49/4;
homedepot.com

⑤
ADHESIVE WREATH HOOK
Command, \$3.99;
homedepot.com

⑥
FLORIST U-PINS
1 3/4 Inch, \$1.47/100;
hobbylobby.com

⑦
FLORIST WATER PICKS
4 3/4 Inch, \$1.99/12;
hobbylobby.com

⑧
FLORIST PICKS WITH WIRE
4 Inch, \$2.99/72;
hobbylobby.com

⑨
GREEN CHENILLE STEMS
6 mm, \$7.99/350;
hobbylobby.com

⑩
CLEAR FISHING LINE
10 Weight, \$6.29; target.com

⑪
JUTE TWINE
190 Foot, \$2.33; homedepot.com





HOLIDAY HOW-TO

OUR PERFECT BOW

HERE ARE A MILLION AND ONE WAYS to tie a bow, but here is our go-to technique. It is simple and results in a perky, rounded shape that attaches easily to gifts, treetops, garlands, wreaths, and more. Use longer or shorter pieces of ribbon to adjust the size of the bow. It's easiest to form the first loop before cutting the ribbon from the spool.



Start the Bow

Make a continuous loop of ribbon. The size and thickness of your loop will determine the size of your bow.



Join the Center

Cinch the loop in the middle with a length of twine or a chenille stem.



Form the Loops

Begin to pull individual bow loops out from the center, alternating pulls from each end.



Create the Tails

Once all the loops are formed, tie a long piece of ribbon around the center to make the tails of the bow.

12

DIAGONAL PLIERS

5 Inch, \$13.99; acehardware.com

13

CLOTH FLORIST STEM WIRES

18 Gauge, \$2.99/40;
hobbylobby.com

14

ORNAMENT HOOKS

1 3/8 Inch, 99 cents/75;
lowes.com

15

FLORIST FOAM CAGE

Oasis (SO-1010-P), \$6.29;
marshallfloralproducts.com

bright idea

Orange curtains printed with blue china and lemons are a joyful nod to the nearby kitchen.



bright idea

Wrap your tree in a garland formed from magnolia leaves stapled together with their backs facing out.

HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

RETURNING TO THE HOUSE WHERE SHE GREW UP—FOR GOOD—WAS THE BEST PRESENT OF ALL FOR BIRMINGHAM RESIDENT BETSY GOLDSTEIN

BY SARAH LATTA

STYLING BY BUFFY HARGETT MILLER

PHOTOGRAPHS BY LAUREY W. GLENN



THE FAMILY ROOM

THE SPACE Chad raised the former kitchen's flat ceiling to make it an A-frame and applied wall paneling vertically to emphasize this room's new height. "Chad put windows along the back wall so I can see the children in the backyard while I'm in the adjacent kitchen," says Betsy.

THE DECORATING Fran convinced the Goldsteins to enliven the walls with turquoise. She says, "Don't overthink paint colors. Picture them as backdrops for all the colorful details you add on top of them." Next, Fran selected comfy furnishings such as a tuxedo sofa, an English club chair, and a wing chair. Bursts of pattern inject youthful energy.

THE DINING ROOM

THE SPACE Back when this was a den, parquet floors suited it. But Fran wanted to dress up the look, so she stained them in diagonal stripes. New wall paneling painted deep blue-green grounds the room and mimics the original knotty pine that once hung there.

THE DECORATING Fran offset the lively floors and blue walls with formal antique furniture and pops of red, including an Asian buffet and burgundy leather chairs, which Fran says were "born for this room." The home's original yellow front door, painted by Betsy's mom, beckons guests to a new side porch off the dining room.



My dad called me one afternoon and said, 'Your mom and I have big news: We're selling the house,' " says Betsy Goldstein. A long cry session and three months later, she and her husband, Trey, a builder, had sold their house and moved into her childhood home with their young sons, Reid (now 5) and Ben (now 3).

Although it was great for growing up in the eighties, the home needed updating—fixing old-house quirks such as closed-off rooms and a tiny, narrow kitchen. Due to flood-zone restrictions, the couple had to work within the house's existing footprint. "We're 99.9% sure that if anyone else had bought it, they would have torn it down," says Betsy. Instead, they hired Birmingham-based architect Chad Bryant to design a remodel with a better flow inside the U-shaped house. Then, the Goldsteins asked their neighbor and interior decorator Fran Keenan to reinvent the space with vibrant colors and lively patterns.

Two years and one baby girl later, the home is now the perfect mix of old and new elements. Betsy says, "The best part about Christmas here is watching my kids open their presents in the same place I did."



1



2



3

GET *a closer* LOOK

[1] **THE BAR CART**

"I love taking something that's aspirational and bringing it down to earth," says Fran. An antique Asian mirror looks less serious stationed above Serena & Lily's South Seas Bar Cart, and the lamp offers light when mixing evening cocktails.

[2] **THE PLACE SETTING**

A striking but laid-back display of family silver, blue-and-white transferware, casual napkins, and oranges used as place card holders adds to the dining room's warm, inviting feel. A centerpiece composed of hydrangeas, limes, roses, and lilies complements the suzani-patterned curtains.

[3] **THE LIGHTING**

A two-tiered iron chandelier above the table fills up vertical space but doesn't block light from the window. Lilac leaves are woven around the fixture to add a simple holiday accent. (Don't let greenery touch the bulbs; replace it if it dries out.)

bright idea

Skip the recessed lighting, and make a statement with a grid of pendant fixtures.



THE KITCHEN

THE SPACE "The extreme separation between the kitchen and living spaces was the Achilles' heel of the house. If you were in the kitchen, you couldn't have a conversation with a person in the den," says Betsy. To create one large, central cooking space, the design team moved the kitchen to the center of the house, where the dining room used to be. They also widened the back doorway to mimic an open-floor-plan feel.

THE DECORATING The kitchen island, arguably the room's prize detail, was inspired by a Parisian apartment Fran saw in a magazine years ago. "It had an amazing old furniture piece as the kitchen island,

and it had clearly lived many years," says Fran. Paintworks Design Studio in Birmingham re-created the patinaed look and topped it with Imperial Danby marble. The color scheme pays homage to Betsy's blue-and-white childhood kitchen. A second farmhouse sink in the island and open shelving on one end are a practical addition for the busy family.

THE ACCESSORIES "I love a completely tiled kitchen," says Fran. Glazed crackle tiles extend from counter to ceiling and continue above the door frame. Painting the beaded-board ceiling with a high-gloss finish gives it a glamorous vibe that also helps bounce light all around the room and complements the sheen from the tiled walls.

THE LIVING ROOM

THE SPACE It was originally located off to the right, but Chad centered the front porch and door to create a cohesive exterior. With this change, guests enter directly into the middle of the living room—a tricky design problem that Fran solved with symmetry. "A room located at the house's center needs strong balance," she says. Now, a well-composed furniture arrangement of two wing chairs flanking a fireplace greets visitors.

THE DECORATING To combat the room's lack of direct light (blocked by the front porch overhang), Fran hung a large mirror over the mantel and painted the ceiling a pale aqua. "Whites are lovely, but without ample natural light, they don't look as great as they should." Continuing the blue scheme, Fran curated a cozy look with an ice blue tight-back sofa, an Oriental rug with blue flowers, and blue-and-white chinoiserie curtains. A pair of antique Swedish consoles propped with framed intaglios flanks the wide entry to the dining room.

THE ACCESSORIES A mix of patterns—from navy-and-cream herringbone to whimsical florals with pops of bold red—introduce the playful mood that defines the rest of the house. Rustic accessories, such as a wood-crate tray atop a glass waterfall coffee table, keep the room from feeling too fancy. Glass jugs with a subtle turquoise hue echo the ceiling color and other blues employed in the room.



GET
a closer
LOOK

[1]

THE STOCKINGS

Supplement your traditional holiday decor with new finds from your own backyard. Here, simple spruce clippings and magnolia leaves tied with a blue ribbon give old family stockings a fresh new look.

[2]

THE STAIRWAY

A mix of seeded eucalyptus, magnolia, and spruce is wired together to hang loosely on the banister. Along the wall behind it, Fran placed family photos, freeing up furniture surfaces to hold decorative objects. "There are no rules for gallery walls—just mix it up. The more frames you have, the better," she says.

[3]

THE MANTEL

"I love shopping the grocery store for Christmas decorations," says Fran. Here, colorful oranges and apples rest on spruce and magnolia clippings. It's no coincidence that these fruits complement her decor scheme. Tailor your selections to your own room's palette.



1



2



3



bright idea

Give kids their own mini trees to decorate their rooms at the holidays so they'll look forward to bedtime!



THE KIDS' ROOM

THE SPACE Originally Betsy's sister's room, the front bedroom now sleeps her two young sons. For a dose of ruggedness, the design team crafted the reclaimed-oak ceiling using leftover wood from one of Trey's construction projects.

THE DECORATING As soon as Fran showed me the dragonfly fabric, I knew it belonged in the boys' room," says Betsy, whose sons like bugs. Fran painted the walls chartreuse (Sour Apple by California Paints) to break up the browns and inject a fun burst of energy. Antique twin beds are regal but sturdy enough to handle roughhousing. A rustic drum shade, a vintage work desk, and a rug from Serena & Lily complete the room.

THE MASTER SUITE

THE SPACE When Betsy's parents bought the house in 1984, the master bedroom was inconveniently tacked onto the back of the house behind her brother's bedroom. To get there, her parents had to tiptoe through his room, which was clearly not ideal for anyone. Betsy and Trey kept the master bedroom location but turned the pass-through room into a hallway, walk-in closet, and large master bath complete with a free-standing tub and sizable Calacatta marble shower.



THE DECORATING A Greek key pattern and a shared—but not matching—color palette form the thread tying together the spaces in the master suite. Fran wanted the rooms to feel like quiet retreats for Betsy and Trey, so she chose calm colors and soft textiles while sprinkling in a few bold colors and prints. In keeping with the rest of the house's design, both spaces incorporate shades of blue—a periwinkle ceiling and royal blue accents in the bedroom and a powder blue graphic rug in the bath.

THE ACCESSORIES The 1960s headboard was too short to make an impact, so Fran had an upholsterer add 2 feet to it and re-cover it with a Kelly green linen. The capiz shell light fixture offers a subtle shot of glamour. Cloudlike Turkish Tulu rugs in both rooms impart a light, pampering feel to the master suite.



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BITES TO A LAVISH FEAST—
OUR GIFTS FROM
THE SOUTHERN LIVING
TEST KITCHEN
TO YOU





I'LL BE HOME FOR

THE HOLIDAY HUNT

WHETHER YOU SOURCE INGREDIENTS IN THE WILD
OR AT THE MARKET, THIS LOUISIANA-INSPIRED MENU MAKES
DELICIOUS USE OF THE SEASON'S GORGEOUS OFFERINGS

RECIPES BY HUNTER LEWIS • PHOTOGRAPHY BY HECTOR SANCHEZ

PROP STYLING BY HEATHER CHADDUCK HILLEGAS • FOOD STYLING BY MARIAN COOPER CAIRNS





PROSCIUTTO-WRAPPED DUCK WITH GUMBO GRAVY

Use paper-thin sliced prosciutto to wrap the duck, and sub chicken thighs for wild duck if needed.

- 2 cups buttermilk
- 2 Tbsp. hot sauce
- 1 1/2 tsp. kosher salt

- 8 wild duck breasts or skinned and boned chicken thighs
- 1/2 tsp. Cajun seasoning
- 8 thin prosciutto slices
- 2 Tbsp. vegetable oil
- Perfect Pot of Rice (recipe, page 114)
- Gumbo Gravy

1. Combine first 3 ingredients in a

zip-top plastic bag; add duck and seal. Cover and chill 8 hours.

2. Preheat oven to 400°. Remove duck; discard marinade. Pat duck dry; sprinkle with Cajun seasoning. Wrap each duck breast with 1 prosciutto slice.

3. Brown duck in hot oil in a skillet over medium-high heat 2 minutes on each side. Place duck on a

wire rack in a jelly-roll pan.

4. Bake at 400° for 6 minutes (10 for chicken) or until a meat thermometer registers 145° or to desired degree of doneness (165° for chicken). Let stand 10 minutes. Serve with rice and gravy.

MAKES 6 to 8 servings. **HANDS-ON** 20 min.; **TOTAL** 10 hours, 35 min., including rice and gravy

Gumbo Gravy

- 1 lb. andouille sausage
- 6 Tbsp. canola oil, divided
- 8 oz. button mushrooms, stemmed and quartered
- 2 Tbsp. brandy or bourbon
- 1/4 cup all-purpose flour
- 1/2 tsp. Cajun seasoning
- 1/4 tsp. dried thyme
- 3 bay leaves
- 2 celery ribs, diced
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 green bell pepper, diced
- 5 green onions, sliced
- 2 cups reduced-sodium chicken broth
- Hot sauce
- 1/8 tsp. filé powder (optional)

1. Slice sausage; cook in 1 Tbsp. hot oil in a Dutch oven over medium-high heat 5 minutes. Remove sausage; drain. Reserve drippings in skillet. Add 1 Tbsp. oil; reduce heat to medium. Cook mushrooms 5 minutes or until brown. Add to sausage.

2. Remove skillet from heat; add brandy. Return skillet to heat; cook 1 minute. Stir in flour and remaining 4 Tbsp. oil; cook, stirring to loosen browned bits, 8 minutes or until roux is the color of chocolate.

3. Stir in Cajun seasoning, next 5 ingredients, and white parts of green onions; cook, stirring constantly, 7 minutes. Add broth; cook, stirring constantly, 5 minutes. Return sausage and mushrooms to pan; cook 20 minutes. Add hot sauce to taste. Discard bay leaves. Sprinkle with filé powder, if desired. Top with green parts of green onions.

MAKES 8 servings. **HANDS-ON** 50 min.; **TOTAL** 1 hour, 10 min.



**ORANGE-
GINGER-
CHILE-GLAZED
CARROTS**

Recipe, page 118

**BRAISED
CABBAGE
WITH APPLE
AND BACON**

Recipe, page 118



**ACADIAN SYRUP CAKE
WITH ROASTED
PEARS AND
CARAMEL SAUCE**

Recipe, page 116



**HOT
BOURBON-
ORANGE
TEA TODDY**

Recipe, page 118

**SPICED
WINE**

Recipe, page 116

HARVEST SALAD WITH ROASTED CITRUS VINAIGRETTE AND SPICED PECANS

Grainy Creole mustard adds texture and a delightful kick to the dressing, and roasting the lemons and oranges heightens both the sweet and sour flavors, creating a wonderfully nuanced balance. If you can find satsuma oranges, definitely use them to add a bright sunshiny tang. You can make the vinaigrette and pecans several days ahead.

1 lemon, halved, bottoms trimmed flat
1 medium-size orange or 2 satsuma oranges, halved
1 Tbsp. sugar
1 Tbsp. sherry vinegar
2 Tbsp. Creole mustard
2 tsp. honey
1 garlic clove, minced
Kosher salt
Freshly ground black pepper
 $\frac{2}{3}$ cup extra virgin olive oil
6 cups packed mixed bitter greens (such as frisée, radicchio, and arugula)
1 small red onion, thinly sliced
1 red-skinned apple or pear, thinly sliced
2 oz. crumbled Gorgonzola or other blue cheese
Spiced Glazed Pecans (recipe, page 155)

1. Preheat broiler with oven rack 3 to 5 inches from heat. Pat lemon and orange halves dry with a paper towel, and sprinkle cut sides with sugar. Place, cut side up, in an aluminum foil-lined jelly-roll pan, and broil 5 to 8 minutes or until caramelized and slightly softened. Cool in pan on a wire rack 10 minutes. 2. Squeeze juice from broiled citrus into a small bowl. Stir in vinegar and next 3 ingredients. Add salt and pepper to taste. Let citrus mixture stand 10 minutes. Add oil in a slow, steady stream, whisking constantly until smooth.



HARVEST SALAD WITH ROASTED CITRUS VINAIGRETTE AND SPICED PECANS

3. Toss together greens, onion slices, and apple slices with desired amount of vinaigrette in a large bowl. Refrigerate any remaining dressing to use later (up to 1 week). Season salad with salt and pepper, and toss again. Sprinkle with cheese and pecans.

MAKES 6 to 8 servings. **HANDS-ON** 20 min., **TOTAL** 50 min.

PERFECT POT OF RICE

2 cups long-grain white rice
1 medium onion, minced
2 bay leaves
1/2 tsp. kosher salt
2 Tbsp. melted butter
 $2\frac{3}{4}$ cups chicken broth

Rinse rice under running water until water runs clear. Sauté

onion, bay leaves, and salt in hot butter in a saucepan over medium-high heat 4 minutes. Add rice; sauté 2 minutes. Add broth. Bring to a boil; cook 5 minutes. Cover, reduce heat to low; simmer 12 minutes. Remove from heat; let stand, covered, 15 minutes. Fluff rice with a fork.

MAKES 6 to 8 servings. **HANDS-ON** 25 min., **TOTAL** 50 min.

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- 1. Wine Bottle**, not available. For a similar look, try **Woven Wine Bottle**, \$99; potterybarn.com
- 2. Personalized Cards**, \$11 to \$23; zazzle.com
- 3. Holiday Garland Salad Plate**, \$39; ballarddesigns.com
- 4. La Rochere Fleur de Lys Highball**, \$11; surlatable.com
- 5. Calaisio Rattan Plate Charger**, \$25; lharkness.com
- 6. Deborah Rhodes Napkin**, \$35; pioneerlinens.com
- 7. Rustic Plaid Party Invitation**, \$167 for 100; tinyprints.com/southernliving
- 8. Richard Ginori Impero Contessa Emerald Plate**, \$100; brombergs.com
- 9. Faux Antler Candelabra**, \$89; potterybarn.com
- 10. Pointer Stationery**, \$24; pagestationery.com
- 11. Raynaud Tresor Turquoise Teacup and Saucer**, \$261; graciousstyle.com
- 12. Calligraphy Bird Coasters**, \$12/set of eight; missivepress.com
- 13. Match 1995 Pewter Napkin Rings**, \$76/pair; silvergallery.com



ACADIAN SYRUP CAKE WITH ROASTED PEARS AND CARAMEL SAUCE

A Cajun classic, this spice cake (aka *Gateau au Sirop*) gets much of its sweet flavor from a Southern staple, cane syrup. We love Steen's 100% Pure Cane Syrup, made in Louisiana. If you can't find pure cane syrup, don't sub a blended syrup; use honey instead. Roast the pears and make the caramel sauce while the cake cools. To dress up the cake for serving, we used a *fleur-de-lis* stencil to create a powdered sugar design atop this glorious dark and deeply delicious cake.

3 cups cake flour
2 tsp. ground cinnamon
1 tsp. ground ginger
1 tsp. baking soda
1 tsp. baking powder
1/2 tsp. table salt
1/2 tsp. fresh finely ground black pepper
1/4 tsp. ground cloves
1 1/2 cups dark cane syrup or honey
1/2 cup vegetable oil
1 large egg, lightly beaten
1 cup buttermilk
Shortening
Powdered sugar
Roasted Pears
Caramel Sauce
Spiced Whipped Cream

1. Preheat oven to 350°. Whisk together first 8 ingredients in a large bowl; make a well in center of mixture. Whisk together syrup and next 3 ingredients in a medium bowl; add to dry ingredients. Whisk until blended. Pour batter into a greased (with shortening) and floured 9-inch springform pan.

2. Bake at 350° for 50 to 60 minutes or until a wooden pick inserted in center comes out clean. Cool cake in pan



Wicker-covered bottles blend beautifully with silver urns, bird feathers, and fresh blooms.

on a wire rack 15 minutes. Remove cake from pan, and cool 1 hour on wire rack. Sprinkle powdered sugar over cake, and serve warm or at room temperature with Roasted Pears, Caramel Sauce, and Spiced Whipped Cream.

MAKES 8 to 10 servings.
HANDS-ON 20 min.; **TOTAL** 3 hours, including pears, sauce, and whipped cream

Roasted Pears

8 medium-size firm pears (3 1/2 to 4 lb.), peeled and cut into 1- to 1 1/2-inch wedges
2 Tbsp. fresh lemon juice
Vegetable cooking spray
2 Tbsp. cold butter, cut into small pieces
1/2 cup unfiltered pure apple cider
1/4 cup dark cane syrup or honey

1. Preheat oven to 400°. Toss together pears and lemon juice in a large bowl. Line a jelly-roll pan with heavy-duty aluminum foil, and lightly coat foil with cooking spray. Place pears in a single layer on prepared pan, and dot with butter.

2. Stir together apple cider and cane syrup in a small saucepan, and cook over medium heat, stirring occasionally, 3 to 4 minutes or just until mixture begins to bubble. Drizzle cider mixture over pears, and toss to coat.

3. Bake pears at 400° for 20 minutes. Remove jelly-roll pan from oven, and carefully stir pears. Bake 30 to 40 more minutes or until pears are golden brown and caramelized and syrup has thickened, stirring every 10 minutes.

MAKES 8 servings. **HANDS-ON** 20 min.; **TOTAL** 1 hour, 10 min.

Caramel Sauce

Bring 1 cup firmly packed **light brown sugar**, 1/2 cup **butter**, 1/4 cup **whipping cream**, 1/4 cup **dark cane syrup**, and a pinch of **salt** to a boil in a small saucepan over medium heat, stirring constantly. Boil, stirring constantly, 2 minutes. Remove from heat, and cool 15 minutes before serving. Refrigerate in an airtight container up to 1 week. To reheat, microwave in a microwave-safe bowl at HIGH 10 to 15 seconds or just until warm; stir until smooth.

MAKES 8 servings. **HANDS-ON** 10 min., **TOTAL** 25 min.

Spiced Whipped Cream

Microwave 1 Tbsp. **dark cane syrup** or honey in a medium-size microwave-safe bowl at HIGH 10 seconds. Stir in 1 cup **heavy cream** and a pinch of **cinnamon** until well blended. Beat at medium-high speed with an electric mixer just until soft peaks form.

MAKES 8 servings. **HANDS-ON** 5 min., **TOTAL** 5 min.

SPICED WINE

This soothing drink is a riff on warm German spiced wine.

1 (750-ml.) bottle medium-bodied red wine (such as Pinot Noir or Beaujolais)
1/2 cup sugar
10 whole cloves
8 cinnamon sticks
4 bay leaves
1 medium-size orange or 2 satsuma oranges, cut into 8 wedges
Garnishes: cinnamon sticks, orange wedges

Bring first 6 ingredients to a boil in a medium saucepan over high heat. Remove from heat, and let stand 10 minutes. Pour through a fine wire-mesh strainer; discard solids. Serve hot or warm.

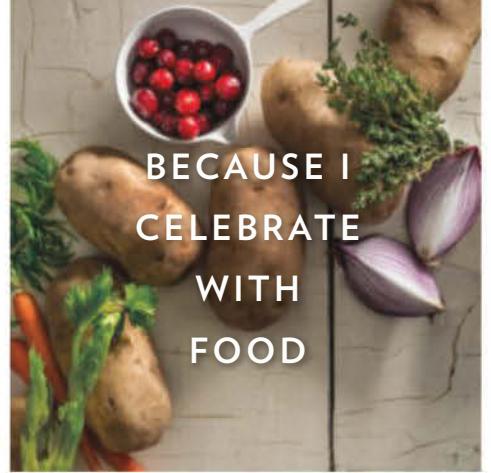
MAKES 3 1/4 cups. **HANDS-ON** 5 min., **TOTAL** 20 min.



TO WOW



TO SHARE
A MOMENT



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WITH
FOOD



TO CARRY ON
TRADITIONS



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TO SHARE WITH
FAMILY



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3. SET THE TABLE

To save time and make cleanup a breeze, set out your Chinet® Cut Crystal® plates and cutlery the night before. Enhance the plate's elegant swirl design by wrapping the cutlery in a napkin and tying with twine. Finish with a sprig of rosemary or holly.

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HOT BOURBON-ORANGE TEA TODDY

This warm reviver can be served before or after dinner.

- 1 (3-inch) piece fresh ginger, peeled and thinly sliced
- 1 lemon, cut into 8 wedges
- 1/4 cup honey
- 1/8 tsp. dried crushed red pepper
- 3 regular-size orange pekoe tea bags
- 1/2 cup bourbon

Bring first 4 ingredients and 1 qt. water to a boil in a medium saucepan over medium-high heat. Remove pan from heat. Add tea bags; steep 10 minutes. Remove and discard solids, using a slotted spoon. Whisk in bourbon, and serve hot or warm.

MAKES 4 1/2 cups. **HANDS-ON** 10 min., **TOTAL** 25 min.

layer in an aluminum foil-lined jelly-roll pan; bake 25 minutes or just until carrots are tender and browned.

2. Meanwhile, bring marmalade and next 3 ingredients to a boil in a small saucepan over medium heat. Boil, stirring often, 4 to 6 minutes or until thickened. Stir in rosemary, if desired.
3. Transfer carrots to a large serving bowl; add marmalade mixture, and toss to coat. Season to taste with pepper. Serve hot or at room temperature.

Note: We tested with Smucker's Sweet Orange Marmalade.

MAKES 6 to 8 servings. **HANDS-ON** 20 min., **TOTAL** 40 min.

BRAISED CABBAGE WITH APPLE AND BACON

Humble cabbage is an affordable and easy holiday side. Make it more elegant by braising red cabbage with apple slices. Adding bacon makes it delicious.

ORANGE-GINGER-CHILE-GLAZED CARROTS

Roasting whole carrots in a hot oven and then giving them a final toss in a sweet glaze yields an unforgettable side dish. Look for multicolored carrots for a stunning presentation. If you can't find them at the supermarket, try a local farmers' market. We use a little chile pepper to add just a whiff of heat. Feel free to increase the pepper or omit it, if you prefer. Also, you can sub chopped fresh thyme or mild flat-leaf parsley for the rosemary.

- 26 small-to-medium carrots with tops (about 1 3/4 lb.)
- 2 Tbsp. olive oil
- 1 tsp. kosher salt
- 1 tsp. ground cumin
- 1/2 cup orange marmalade
- 1/2 cup fresh orange juice
- 1 tsp. ground ginger
- 1/4 tsp. dried crushed red pepper
- 1 tsp. minced fresh rosemary leaves (optional)
- Freshly ground black pepper

1. Preheat oven to 475°. Cut tops from carrots, leaving 1 inch of greenery on each. Use a vegetable peeler to peel outer layer of tops. Peel carrots, if desired. Toss together carrots and oil in a large bowl. Sprinkle with salt and cumin. Spread carrots in a single

- 4 thick bacon slices, cut into 1/4-inch pieces
- 4 celery hearts, thinly sliced, leaves reserved
- 1 medium onion, thinly sliced
- 2 tsp. fennel seeds (optional)
- 1/2 cup white wine
- 1 head red cabbage (about 2 lb.), thinly sliced
- 1 cup reduced-sodium chicken broth
- 1 cup unfiltered apple cider
- 1 garlic clove, thinly sliced
- 2 bay leaves
- 1 tart apple, thinly sliced
- 1 Tbsp. apple cider vinegar

1. Cook bacon in a Dutch oven over medium heat 4 minutes on each side or until crisp; remove bacon from pan, and drain. Reserve 3 Tbsp. drippings in pan.

2. Increase heat to medium-high. Add celery, onion, and, if desired, fennel seeds; sauté 6 minutes. Add wine, and cook 2 minutes or until reduced by half. Stir in cabbage and next 5 ingredients. Add salt and pepper to taste.

3. Reduce heat to low. Cover and cook 45 minutes or to desired tenderness. Stir in vinegar. Top with celery leaves and bacon.

MAKES 6 to 8 servings. **HANDS-ON** 35 min.; **TOTAL** 1 hour, 20 min.



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FOR CHRISTMAS CHEER, DECKING OF THE HALLS,
AND SIMPLE, DELICIOUS, MAKE-AHEAD NIBBLES

STORY AND RECIPES BY WHITNEY WRIGHT

PHOTOGRAPHY BY ALISON MIKSCH

PROP STYLING BY CAROLINE M. CUNNINGHAM

FOOD STYLING BY VANESSA MCNEIL ROCCHIO

**BACON-FIG
TASSIES**

Recipe, page 122

**SWEET POTATO
TARTLETS**

Recipe, page 126



BACON-FIG TASSIES

Pinched for time? Swap the dough for frozen mini-phyllo pastry shells.

5 uncooked bacon slices
1/3 cup butter, softened
2 (8-oz.) packages cream cheese, softened
1 cup all-purpose flour
1/4 cup fine cornmeal
1 1/2 cups diced dried figs
1/4 cup sugar
3/4 cup red wine
1 1/2 tsp. kosher salt, divided
8 oz. goat cheese, softened
1 tsp. lemon zest
2 tsp. fresh lemon juice
2 tsp. chopped fresh thyme
1/2 tsp. ground black pepper

1. Cook bacon in a skillet over medium heat 8 minutes or until crisp. Remove bacon, and drain on paper towels; reserve 2 Tbsp. drippings. Finely chop bacon.

2. Beat butter, 8 oz. cream cheese, and 2 Tbsp. bacon drippings at medium speed with an electric mixer 2 minutes. Gradually add flour and cornmeal; beat at low speed until blended, and shape into 48 balls. Cover and chill 1 hour.

3. Preheat oven to 350°. Place balls in cups of 2 (24-cup) mini muffin pans; press dough into and up the sides of cups to form shells.

4. Bake at 350° for 22 minutes or until golden. Cool in pans on a wire rack 10 minutes. (Press shells gently to reshape, if necessary.) Remove shells from pan.

5. Bring figs, next 2 ingredients, and 1/2 tsp. salt to a simmer in a saucepan over medium heat; cook, stirring occasionally, 6 minutes or until syrupy. Cool 15 minutes.

6. Beat goat cheese, next 4 ingredients, 8 oz. cream cheese, and 1 tsp. salt at medium speed until smooth. Spoon goat cheese mixture into a zip-top plastic freezer bag, and snip 1 corner.

7. Spoon about 1 tsp. fig mixture into each shell, and pipe goat cheese mixture over fig mixture. Sprinkle with bacon.

MAKES 4 dozen. **HANDS-ON** 1 hour, 20 min.; **TOTAL** 3 hours, 20 min.

CUBAN SLIDERS



CUBAN SLIDERS

A welcome change from the ubiquitous hamburger slider, this mini sandwich has all the flavor of a great Cuban. The key here is to crisp the bread by warming the sandwiches in a hot jelly-roll pan and adding weight on top of the bread.

1/4 cup olive oil
1 (12-oz.) package Hawaiian sweet dinner rolls
4 oz. thinly sliced deli ham
4 oz. thinly sliced deli-roasted pork
6 (1-oz.) Swiss cheese slices
1/2 cup chopped dill pickle chips
3 Tbsp. yellow mustard

1. Preheat oven to 400°. Spread olive oil in a jelly-roll pan; place pan in oven to heat.

2. Remove rolls from package. (Do not separate rolls.) Cut rolls in half horizontally, creating 1 top and 1 bottom. Layer ham, pork, and Swiss cheese on bottom half. Spread chopped pickles over cheese. Spread mustard on cut side of top half of rolls, and place, cut side down, on bottom half to make a large sandwich.

3. Remove jelly-roll pan from oven, and carefully transfer sandwich to hot pan. Place a cast-iron skillet or griddle directly on rolls.

4. Bake at 400° for 15 minutes or until cheese melts and bread is crisp. Remove from oven; cool 5 minutes. Cut into 12 sliders, and serve immediately.

Note: We tested with King's Hawaiian Original Hawaiian Sweet Rolls.

MAKES 12 servings. **HANDS-ON** 20 min., **TOTAL** 40 min.

ORANGE-BASIL BAKED BRIE

Serve on a pretty cutting board with a cheese knife, and let guests cut their own portions.

1 (8-oz.) Brie round
1/2 (16-oz.) package frozen phyllo pastry, thawed
1 cup butter, melted
1/3 cup sweet orange marmalade
1/3 cup chopped fresh basil
1/4 tsp. freshly ground black pepper
1/8 tsp. kosher salt
1/2 cup chopped roasted salted almonds

1. Preheat oven to 375°. Trim and discard rind from sides of Brie. Cut Brie into 1/4- to 1/2-inch slices.

2. Place 2 phyllo pastry sheets side by side, with long sides slightly overlapping, on parchment paper. (You should have an approximately 24- x 17-inch rectangle.) Brush phyllo lightly with melted butter. Top with 2 phyllo pastry sheets, and brush with butter. Repeat with butter and remaining 1/2 package of phyllo pastry sheets.

3. Arrange Brie slices across center of phyllo rectangle, overlapping slightly and leaving 3 1/2 inches at each short end. Spread orange marmalade over Brie, and sprinkle with basil, pepper, salt, and 1/4 cup chopped almonds. Fold phyllo into center, covering filling. (Long sides will overlap.) Carefully turn over phyllo packet, and place, seam side down, on parchment paper. Transfer phyllo packet and parchment paper to a baking sheet. Brush with remaining butter, and sprinkle with remaining 1/4 cup almonds.

4. Bake at 375° for 30 to 40 minutes or until golden brown. Cool 15 minutes before slicing. Serve warm or at room temperature.

MAKES 12 to 14 appetizer servings. **HANDS-ON** 40 min.; **TOTAL** 1 hour, 25 min.

MARINATED OLIVES AND ALMONDS

A big batch of these antipasti will last in the refrigerator up to a week. It's the perfect snack to serve unexpected holiday company. For extra flavor, use smoked almonds.

1/2 cup extra virgin olive oil
3 garlic cloves, crushed
2 Tbsp. grapefruit zest

2 Tbsp. fresh grapefruit juice
2 Tbsp. red wine vinegar
1 Tbsp. chopped fresh thyme leaves
1 Tbsp. orange zest
2 tsp. sugar
1 tsp. kosher salt
1/2 tsp. freshly ground black pepper
4 cups pitted and drained green and black olives
1 1/2 cups roasted salted almonds

1. Stir together first 10 ingredients in a large bowl. Add olives; toss with marinade to coat. Cover and chill 4 to 24 hours.

2. Remove and discard crushed garlic cloves, and stir in roasted almonds just before serving. Serve with a slotted spoon.

MAKES 10 to 12 appetizer servings.
HANDS-ON 10 min.; **TOTAL** 4 hours, 10 min.

MARINATED OLIVES AND ALMONDS

ORANGE-BASIL BAKED BRIE

GUMBO RICE FRITTERS

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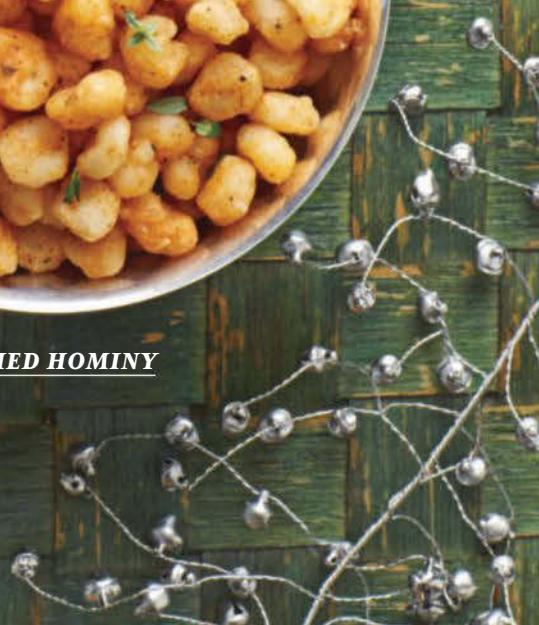
**BENNE-MAPLE
ROASTED PECANS**



**WINE-SPIKED
CRANBERRY
CHEESE LOG**



FRIED HOMINY



BENNE-MAPLE ROASTED PECANS

Make these a few days ahead, and chill in an airtight container.

1/4 cup butter
4 cups pecan halves, toasted
1/4 cup firmly packed brown sugar
1/4 cup maple syrup
1 Tbsp. soy sauce
3/4 tsp. kosher salt
1/8 tsp. ground red pepper
1 Tbsp. sesame oil
2 Tbsp. sesame seeds, toasted

Melt butter in a saucepan over medium-high heat; stir in pecans and next 5 ingredients. Cook, stirring constantly, 5 minutes or until syrupy coating on nuts almost evaporates. Stir in sesame oil; remove from heat. Spread pecans in a parchment paper-lined jelly-roll pan; sprinkle with sesame seeds. Cool completely.

MAKES 4 cups. **HANDS-ON** 15 min.; **TOTAL** 1 hour, 5 min.

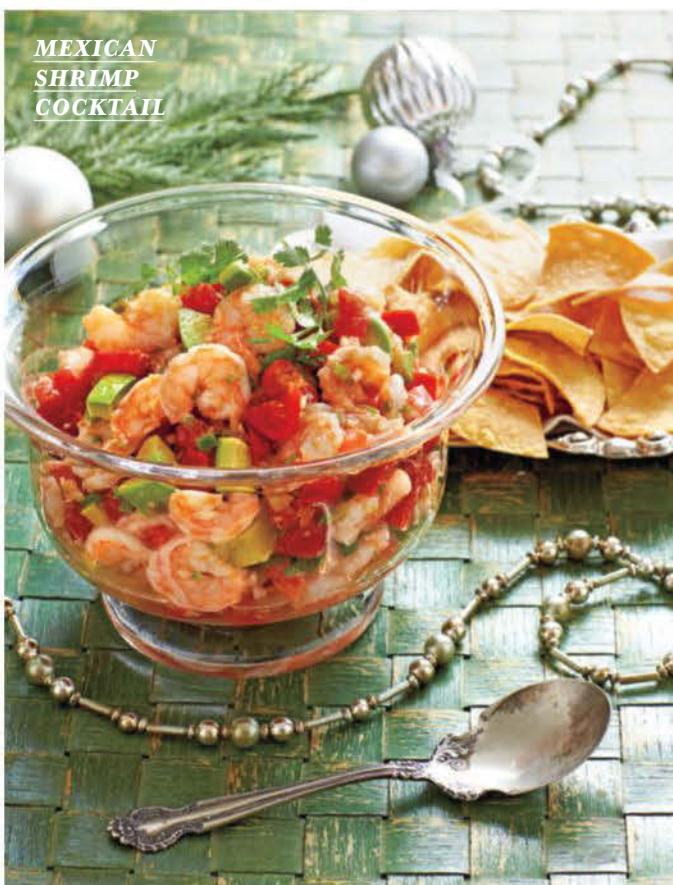
FRIED HOMINY

Dangerously delicious, this is the new popcorn for tree trimming—if you don't eat it all first.

2 (14.5-oz.) cans white hominy, drained
Canola oil
1 cup all-purpose flour
1/2 cup plain white cornmeal
1/4 cup cornstarch
3/4 tsp. table salt
1/2 tsp. ground black pepper
Savory Spice Mix or Cinnamon Spice Mix

1. Spread hominy on paper towels in a jelly-roll pan. Chill, uncovered, 3 to 24 hours.
2. Pour oil to a depth of 3 inches in a Dutch oven. Heat over medium-high heat to 350°. Combine flour and next 4 ingredients; toss with hominy, in batches. Shake off excess flour.
3. Fry hominy, in batches, 6 minutes or until kernels float to

MEXICAN SHRIMP COCKTAIL



the top; remove and drain. Sprinkle hot hominy with desired amount of either spice mix.

MAKES 8 to 10 servings. **HANDS-ON** 40 min.; **TOTAL** 3 hours, 45 min., including spice mix

Savory Spice Mix

Combine 1 Tbsp. chopped fresh **thyme**, **3/4** tsp. **table salt**, **1/2** tsp. ground **cumin**, **1/2** tsp. ground **coriander**, **1/2** tsp. **paprika**, **1/2** tsp. **black pepper**, **1/4** tsp. ground **red pepper**, and **1/4** tsp. dried **oregano**.
MAKES about 4 tsp. **HANDS-ON** 5 min., **TOTAL** 5 min.

Cinnamon Spice Mix

Combine **1/4** cup granulated **sugar**, **1/4** cup **light brown sugar**, **3/4** tsp. **table salt**, **1/4** tsp. **cinnamon**, and **1/8** tsp. ground **red pepper**.

MAKES about **1/2** cup. **HANDS-ON** 5 min., **TOTAL** 5 min.

WINE-SPIKED CRANBERRY CHEESE LOG

Use this succulent, syrupy fruit as a topping for pound cake or ice cream. You can also spoon it over a softened log of goat cheese instead of cream cheese.

1 (10-oz.) package fresh or frozen cranberries, thawed
1 cup red wine
3/4 cup sugar
5 fresh sage leaves
3 fresh thyme sprigs
1 cinnamon stick
1/4 tsp. table salt
1/4 tsp. ground allspice
1 (8-oz.) package cream cheese, softened
Assorted crackers

1. Stir together first 8 ingredients in a medium saucepan. Bring to a

boil over high heat, stirring occasionally. Reduce heat to medium-low, and simmer, stirring occasionally, 15 to 18 minutes or until about one-fourth of liquid remains. Remove from heat, and cool 20 minutes. Discard thyme sprigs, sage leaves, and cinnamon stick.

2. Place cream cheese on a serving platter. Spoon desired amount of cranberry mixture over cream cheese. Serve with crackers.

MAKES 12 to 14 appetizer servings. **HANDS-ON** 20 min., **TOTAL** 55 min.

MEXICAN SHRIMP COCKTAIL

This fresh, colorful swap for creamy shrimp dip was inspired by reader Carolyn Coleman.

1 lb. peeled, medium-size cooked shrimp, deveined and halved
3 plum tomatoes, diced
3 jalapeño peppers, seeded and diced
1 small sweet onion, diced
1 garlic clove, minced
1/2 cup fresh lime juice
1/4 cup extra virgin olive oil
1/4 cup chili sauce
1/4 cup spicy tomato juice
1/4 cup chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley
1/4 cup chopped fresh cilantro
2 Tbsp. hot sauce
2 Tbsp. prepared horseradish
1 avocado, diced
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
Tortilla chips

1. Stir together first 13 ingredients in a bowl. Cover and chill 1 to 24 hours.

2. Stir in avocado; add salt and pepper to taste. Serve with tortilla chips.

Note: We tested with V-8 Spicy Hot 100% Vegetable Juice.

MAKES 8 to 10 appetizer servings. **HANDS-ON** 30 min.; **TOTAL** 1 hour, 30 min.

SWEET POTATO TARTLETS

These festive tarts are the perfect sweet treat for grazing guests. You can make them up to a day ahead, and store, covered, in the fridge.

4 (1.9-oz.) packages frozen mini-phyllo shells, thawed
8 oz. cream cheese, softened
1/2 cup sugar
1 cup mashed, cooked sweet potato
1/2 cup sour cream
1 large egg
1 tsp. vanilla extract
Brown Sugar Pecans
Garnishes: mint leaves, sweetened whipped cream

1. Preheat oven to 350°. Place shells on 2 baking sheets. Process

cream cheese and sugar in a food processor until smooth. Add sweet potato and next 3 ingredients; process until smooth. Spoon filling into shells.

2. Bake at 350° for 15 minutes or until center is set. Cool completely on a wire rack. Cover; chill 1 hour. Top with Brown Sugar Pecans.

MAKES 5 dozen. **HANDS-ON** 25 min.; **TOTAL** 3 hours, 35 min., including pecans

Brown Sugar Pecans

Preheat oven to 350°. Stir together 1/2 cup **light brown sugar** and 6 Tbsp. **dark corn syrup** in a medium bowl. Stir in 2 cups **pecan halves**. Spread over a foil-lined baking sheet coated with cooking spray. Bake 12 to 15 minutes, stirring every 4 minutes. Cool completely (about 50 minutes).

MAKES 2 cups. **HANDS-ON** 25 min.; **TOTAL** 1 hour, 15 min.

GUMBO RICE FRITTERS

You can make the rice balls two weeks ahead and freeze. Bread and fry straight from the freezer.

1 qt. reduced-sodium chicken broth
1 cup chopped leek
1 small onion, chopped
6 Tbsp. butter, divided
2 garlic cloves, minced
1 1/2 cups uncooked Arborio rice
1/2 cup white wine
2 tsp. kosher salt, divided
1/2 tsp. black pepper, divided
1 green bell pepper, minced
1 red bell pepper, minced
1 lb. peeled cooked shrimp, chopped
1 1/2 tsp. filé powder
1/2 tsp. Cajun seasoning
1/2 tsp. hot sauce
3 green onions, thinly sliced
1 cup all-purpose flour
4 large eggs, lightly beaten
3 cups panko (Japanese breadcrumbs)
Vegetable oil
Spicy Mayo

1. Bring broth to a simmer in a saucepan. Sauté leek and onion in 2 Tbsp. melted butter in a Dutch oven over medium heat 10 minutes. Add garlic and rice; sauté 2 minutes. Stir in wine; cook 3 minutes. Add 1 cup hot broth; cook, stirring constantly, until liquid is absorbed. Repeat, adding all of broth, 1 cup at a time. Stir in 2 Tbsp. butter, 1 1/2 tsp. salt, and 1/4 tsp. pepper. Spread on a baking sheet; cool 10 minutes.

2. Sauté bell peppers in 2 Tbsp. melted butter in a large Dutch oven over medium-high heat 6 minutes. Stir in shrimp and next 4 ingredients. Remove from heat; stir in rice mixture.

3. Shape mixture into 1 1/2-inch balls. Cover and chill 30 minutes to 24 hours.

4. Stir together flour, 1/2 tsp. salt and 1/4 tsp. pepper. Place eggs in a second bowl; place breadcrumbs in a third bowl. Dredge rice balls in flour mixture; dip in eggs. Roll in crumbs. Chill 10 minutes.

5. Pour oil to a depth of 5 inches into a large Dutch oven; heat over medium-high heat to 350°. Fry fritters, in batches, 3 minutes or until golden; drain on paper towels. Keep warm in a 250° oven. Serve with Spicy Mayo.

MAKES 35 appetizer servings. **HANDS-ON** 1 hour, 45 min.; **TOTAL** 2 hours, 40 min., including mayo

Spicy Mayo

Combine 1/4 cup **mayonnaise** and 3 Tbsp. **hot sauce**. Add **salt** and **black pepper** to taste.

MAKES about 1/3 cup. **HANDS-ON** 5 min.; **TOTAL** 5 min.

Lemon-Feta Fritters

Prepare Gumbo Rice Fritters, omitting bell peppers, shrimp, filé, Cajun seasoning, green onions, hot sauce, and Spicy Mayo, and reducing **butter** to 1/4 cup. Prepare recipe through Step 1, stirring 3 Tbsp. each chopped **parsley** and chopped **oregano**, 1 Tbsp. chopped **rosemary**, 2 tsp. **lemon zest**, and 1 Tbsp. fresh **lemon juice** into rice. Cut 7 oz. **feta cheese** into 1/2-inch cubes. Omit Step 2, and proceed as directed in Steps 3 through 5, pressing 1 feta cheese cube into each rice ball; reshape.

HANDS-ON 1 hour, 55 min.; **TOTAL** 2 hours, 45 min.

Mushroom-and-Mozzarella Fritters

Prepare Gumbo Rice Fritters, omitting bell peppers, shrimp, filé, Cajun seasoning, green onions, hot sauce, and Spicy Mayo. Prepare recipe through Step 1. Sauté 2 (8-oz.) packages sliced **cremini mushrooms** in 2 Tbsp. melted **butter** and 1 Tbsp. **olive oil** in a large skillet over medium-high heat 7 minutes. Add **salt** and **pepper** to taste. Stir in rice mixture. Cut 8 oz. fresh **mozzarella cheese** into 1/2-inch cubes. Omit Step 2, and proceed with recipe as directed in Steps 3 through 5, pressing 1 cheese cube into each rice ball; reshape.

HANDS-ON 2 hours; **TOTAL** 2 hours, 55 min.

HOW-TO

It's Party Season!

FOLLOW THESE FIVE KEY TIPS TO MAKE ENTERTAINING AT A COME-AND-GO PARTY LOOK EFFORTLESS

1. WELCOME GUESTS WITH REFRESHMENT. Never have empty-handed guests. Set up a bar or serve-yourself-style drink station that's visible (or communicated) as folks arrive.

2. CHOOSE TUNES THOUGHTFULLY. A great playlist keeps things hopping, even during lulls between crowds. Make it long (at least 2 hours) with a mix of popular songs people can hum along to, holiday tunes, and a few classics sprinkled in the mix.

3. PICK A MENU WITH DISHES SERVED AT A VARIETY OF TEMPERATURES (cold, room temp, and hot). Minimize foods that have to be piping hot, opting instead for items you can keep warm in a low-temperature oven. Better yet, use a stylish slow cooker or chafing dish on your buffet.

4. PLACE LITTLE NIBBLES AROUND THE HOUSE. Scatter bowls of nuts and olives or other appetizers around your home. This gets guests moving from room to room and helps prevent traffic jams at the bar and buffet.

5. INVEST IN PARTY RENTALS. You might be surprised to learn how affordable it is to rent plates and glasses. Consider the small added expense against the convenience of not having to clean all of your own dishes afterwards.

MAKE HANDCRAFTED

FLAVOR YOUR HOLIDAY

CENTERPIECE.

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I'LL BE HOME FOR

COOKIES AND CANDY

**SWEETEN THE SEASON WITH THESE GIFT-WORTHY
GOODIES FROM OUR UPDATED COLLECTION
OF SCRATCH-MADE TREATS**



**PEPPERMINT
MERINGUE
COOKIES**
Recipe, page 130

RECIPES BY KATHRYN DELANEY • PHOTOGRAPHY BY ALISON MIKSCH
PROP STYLING BY BUFFY HARGETT MILLER • FOOD STYLING BY WILLIAM SMITH



PECAN
LINZER
COOKIES

Recipe, page 133

PEPPERMINT MERINGUE COOKIES

Use food coloring gel in a squeeze bottle or a food-safe paintbrush to make lines in the piping bag. Once meringues are cooled, store them in an airtight container at room temperature.

6 large egg whites
1½ tsp. white vinegar
1½ cups sugar
1 tsp. peppermint extract
Red food coloring gel

1. Preheat oven to 200°. Let egg whites stand 20 minutes. Beat egg whites at high speed with an electric mixer, using whisk attachment, until stiff peaks form. Reduce speed to medium. Add vinegar; add sugar, ½ cup at a time, and beat until blended. Beat 2 minutes. Beat in extract. **2.** Paint 3 or 4 evenly spaced thin stripes of red food coloring gel on inside of a decorating bag, starting at tip and ending three-fourths of the way up bag. Gently spoon meringue into center of bag, filling three-fourths full. Snip end of bag. Pipe about 2 Tbsp. meringue onto 1 parchment paper-lined baking sheet, leaving 1 inch between each cookie. Repeat with remaining meringue, using a clean bag for each batch. **3.** Bake at 200° for 2 hours. Turn off oven, and let meringues stand in oven until completely cool (about 3 hours).

MAKES about 7 ½ dozen. **HANDS-ON** 30 min.; **TOTAL** 5 hours, 30 min.

Chocolate-Dipped Peppermint Meringues

Meringues: Prepare recipe as directed. Melt 2 cups **milk chocolate morsels** in microwave according to package directions. Stir until smooth. Dip bottom of each cooled cookie in melted chocolate, and place on a parchment paper-lined baking sheet. Let stand 15 minutes or until chocolate sets.

HANDS-ON 40 min.; **TOTAL** 5 hours, 55 min.

MINTED WHITE CHOCOLATE BALLS

Recipe below



MOCHA BALLS

Coat in chocolate two at a time.

56 vanilla wafers, crushed (less than 1 [11-oz.] box)
1 cup chopped almonds, toasted
½ cup powdered sugar
2 Tbsp. unsweetened cocoa
4 ½ tsp. light corn syrup
6 Tbsp. coffee liqueur
3 cups semisweet chocolate morsels

Stir together first 6 ingredients; shape into 32 balls. Microwave chocolate in a bowl at HIGH 30 seconds; stir. Microwave 20 more seconds or until smooth, stirring once. Coat balls in chocolate. Place in a parchment paper-lined pan. Chill 30 minutes or until set.

MAKES 32 cookies. **HANDS-ON** 30 min.; **TOTAL** 1 hour

Minted White Chocolate Balls:

Prepare recipe as directed, substituting **pecans** for almonds, 6 Tbsp. **peppermint schnapps** for coffee liqueur, and **white chocolate morsels** for chocolate morsels. Sprinkle with crushed hard **peppermint candies** immediately after coating with white chocolate.

MISSISSIPPI MUD MEDALLIONS

You can substitute mini marshmallows for espresso beans.

6 whole graham crackers
2 cups semisweet chocolate morsels
2/3 cup pecan halves, toasted
1/4 cup chocolate-covered espresso beans

1. Place 3 whole graham crackers in a zip-top plastic freezer bag, and roll with a rolling pin until finely crushed. Spoon crushed graham crackers by level ½ teaspoonfuls 1 inch apart onto a parchment paper-lined baking sheet; flatten into 1-inch rounds. Break remaining crackers into ½-inch pieces.

2. Microwave chocolate morsels in a microwave-safe bowl at HIGH 30 seconds; stir. Microwave 10 to 20 more seconds or until melted and smooth, stirring at 10-second intervals.

3. Spoon melted chocolate into a large zip-top plastic freezer bag. Snip 1 corner of bag to make a small hole. Pipe chocolate over each graham cracker round.

4. Working quickly, press 1 (½-inch) graham cracker piece, 1 toasted pecan, and 1 espresso bean onto each chocolate round. Chill 15 minutes. Store in an airtight container at room temperature up to 1 week.

Note: To transfer chocolate into zip-top plastic freezer bag, nestle corner of bag in a 1-cup measuring cup and scrape melted chocolate into the opened bag, pooling it in the corner that is nestled in the measuring cup.

MAKES 3 dozen. **HANDS-ON** 25 min., **TOTAL** 40 min.

COOKIE PRESS SANDWICHES

Pick your favorite filling for this classic sandwich cookie: We tested with peppermint, orange, and lemon extracts and used food coloring to match each flavor.

1 cup butter, softened
½ cup granulated sugar
½ tsp. almond extract
½ tsp. vanilla extract
1 large egg
2 ¼ cups all-purpose flour
½ tsp. table salt
½ cup butter, softened



MISSISSIPPI
MUD
MEDALLIONS

COOKIE PRESS SANDWICHES

Recipe, page 130



1 (16-oz.) package powdered sugar
 3 to 4 Tbsp. milk
 $\frac{3}{4}$ tsp. flavored extract (such as peppermint, lemon, or orange)
 Food coloring
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup powdered sugar

1. Preheat oven to 400°. Beat first 4 ingredients at medium speed with an electric mixer 1 minute. Add egg, and beat 30 seconds.
2. Sift together flour and salt. Add flour mixture to butter mixture, and beat at low speed 30 seconds. Scrape sides of bowl, and beat 15 more seconds. Divide dough into 3 equal portions.
3. Following manufacturer's instructions, use a cookie press fitted with desired disk to shape dough into cookies, spacing cookies 1 1/2 inches apart on 2 ungreased baking sheets.
4. Bake at 400° for 7 minutes, placing 1 baking sheet on middle oven rack and 1 sheet on lower oven rack. Rotate baking sheets front to back and top rack to bottom rack. Bake 1 to 2 more minutes or until golden brown around edges. Transfer cookies to a wire rack, and cool completely (about 10 minutes). Repeat with remaining dough.
5. Beat 1/2 cup butter and next 2 ingredients at medium speed 2 minutes. Add flavored extract; beat at low speed until blended. Add desired amount of food coloring; beat at low speed until blended.
6. Spoon filling into a zip-top plastic freezer bag. (Do not seal.) Snip 1 corner of bag to make a small hole. Pipe filling onto bottom of 1 cookie. Top with a second cookie, so bottom sides of both cookies touch filling. Repeat with remaining cookies and filling. Sprinkle with powdered sugar. Serve immediately, or let stand 2 hours. Store in an airtight container up to 2 weeks.

MAKES 3 dozen. **HANDS-ON** 2 hours; **TOTAL** 2 hours, 45 min.



TRIPLE GINGER SNAPPERS

1/2 cup butter, softened
 14 Tbsp. granulated sugar
 2 Tbsp. light brown sugar
 2 tsp. dark molasses
 1 large egg white
 2 Tbsp. grated fresh ginger
 $\frac{1}{3}$ cups all-purpose flour
 1 Tbsp. ground ginger
 1 tsp. ground cinnamon
 $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. baking soda
 $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. table salt
 $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. ground nutmeg
 $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. ground cloves
 $\frac{1}{3}$ cup crystallized ginger, minced

1. Beat first 4 ingredients at medium-high speed with an electric mixer 30 seconds. Add egg white and fresh ginger; beat 1 minute. Sift together flour and next 6 ingredients. Add flour

mixture to butter mixture; beat at low speed 30 seconds. Scrape bowl; fold in crystallized ginger.

2. Divide dough into 2 disks; wrap tightly in plastic wrap. Chill 4 hours to 3 days. Unwrap 1 dough disk; generously flour both sides. Place between 2 pieces of parchment paper, and roll to 1/8-inch thickness. Chill 30 minutes. Repeat with remaining dough disk.
3. Cut chilled dough with a 2 1/2-inch round cutter; place cookies 2 inches apart on parchment paper-lined baking sheets. Chill 15 minutes.

4. Preheat oven to 350°. Bake, in batches, 12 minutes. Rotate pans front to back; bake 4 more minutes. (Cookies will puff up and collapse.) Cool completely on parchment paper on wire racks.

MAKES about 2 dozen. **HANDS-ON** 1 hour, 15 min.; **TOTAL** 6 hours, 45 min.

PECAN LINZER COOKIES

Use your favorite jams to vary the flavor and color of these beauties.

2 1/4 cups all-purpose flour
 1 cup pecan halves
 1 tsp. ground cinnamon
 $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. ground cloves
 1 cup butter, very soft
 $\frac{1}{3}$ cup granulated sugar
 1 tsp. lemon zest
 1 large egg
 1 large egg yolk
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup powdered sugar
 $\frac{3}{4}$ cup peach jam

1. Pulse first 4 ingredients in a food processor until finely ground.
2. Beat butter, sugar, and zest at medium speed with an electric mixer 1 minute. Add egg and egg yolk; beat 30 seconds. Scrape bowl; beat 30 seconds. Add flour mixture, beating until combined.
3. Shape dough into 2 (1/2-inch-thick) rectangles. Wrap each rectangle in plastic wrap, and chill 4 hours to 3 days.
4. Preheat oven to 350°. Generously flour both sides of dough; place on parchment paper. Roll each into a 14- x 10-inch rectangle. Cut each rectangle into 24 (2-inch) squares, rerolling scraps as needed. Chill on parchment paper 30 minutes.
5. Place cookies 1 inch apart on parchment paper-lined baking sheets. Cut centers out of half of cookies with a lightly floured 1 1/4-inch square cutter. (If desired, place dough centers on a parchment paper-lined baking sheet; chill 15 minutes, and bake as directed.)
6. Bake at 350° for 12 to 14 minutes or until edges are golden. Cool completely on parchment paper on a wire rack. Repeat with remaining cookies.
7. Sprinkle powdered sugar over hollow cookies. Spread about 1/4 tsp. jam onto each solid cookie; top with hollow cookies.

MAKES about 2 dozen. **HANDS-ON** 1 hour; **TOTAL** 6 hours, 10 min.

WREATH MACAROONS

Use your fingers to make a small hole in the center of each cookie.

14 oz. sweetened shredded coconut
2 large egg whites
1/2 cup plus 2 tsp. sugar
1 tsp. vanilla extract
Holiday nonpareils
Finely chopped candied cherries

1. Preheat oven to 350°. Combine first 4 ingredients. Drop by heaping tablespoonfuls onto 3 parchment paper-lined baking sheets, about 12 per sheet. Make a hole in center of each cookie; pinch each cookie into a wreath shape. Sprinkle with nonpareils and cherries.

2. Bake 2 baking sheets at 350° for 14 minutes. Rotate pans front to back, and bake 2 more minutes or until coconut begins to brown. Transfer parchment paper with cookies to wire racks; cool completely. Repeat with remaining baking sheet.

MAKES about 3 dozen. **HANDS-ON** 30 min.; **TOTAL** 1 hour, 15 min.

RED VELVET FUDGE

If you like red velvet cake, you'll love this fudge.

12 oz. cream cheese, softened
1 Tbsp. milk
1 tsp. vanilla extract
1/4 tsp. table salt
1 lb. powdered sugar
1 cup white chocolate morsels
2/3 cup milk chocolate morsels
1 (1-oz.) bottle red liquid food coloring
1 cup toasted chopped walnuts

1. Line an 8-inch square pan with parchment paper, extending over sides; coat with cooking spray.

2. Beat cream cheese and next 3 ingredients with an electric



mixer until creamy. Beat in powdered sugar, 1 cup at a time. Beat at high speed 3 minutes.

3. Melt white chocolate according to package directions; beat into cream cheese mixture. Reserve one-third of cream cheese mixture. Melt milk chocolate according to package directions. Stir milk chocolate and food coloring into remaining two-thirds of cream cheese mixture. Fold in walnuts. Pour into prepared pan; tap pan on counter to remove air bubbles. Freeze 10 minutes.

4. Spread reserved cream cheese mixture over fudge; chill 4 to 24 hours. Remove fudge from pan. Cut into rectangles, rinsing and wiping knife clean between each slice. Chill until ready to serve.

MAKES about 2 dozen (2- x 1 1/4-inch) rectangles. **HANDS-ON** 30 min.; **TOTAL** 4 hours, 40 min.

Cream Cheese Mints: Prepare recipe as directed, omitting peppermint extract and zests.

HIDDEN KISS COOKIES

We love using mint kisses and candy cane kisses for the holidays.

2 1/4 cups all-purpose flour
1 cup sliced almonds
2/3 cup powdered sugar
1/2 tsp. table salt
1 1/4 cups butter, softened
1 tsp. vanilla extract
1/4 tsp. almond extract
42 chocolate kisses

1. Preheat oven to 350°. Pulse first 4 ingredients in a food processor until almonds are finely ground.

2. Beat butter together with vanilla extract and almond extract at medium-high speed with an electric mixer about 30 seconds or until creamy. Add flour mixture in 2 batches, beating until blended after each addition. Turn dough out onto a lightly floured surface, and knead 4 to 5 times. Divide dough in half.

3. Working with 1 dough portion, drop by heaping teaspoonfuls 1 inch apart on 2 parchment paper-lined baking sheets. Press 1 chocolate kiss into center of each cookie. Working with remaining dough portion, cover each chocolate kiss with another heaping teaspoonful of dough. Pinch top and bottom edges of dough together to seal.

4. Bake at 350° for 15 minutes, placing 1 baking sheet on middle oven rack and 1 sheet on lower oven rack. Rotate pans front to back and top rack to bottom rack. Bake 3 to 5 more minutes or until edges of cookies just begin to brown. Cool cookies on parchment paper on wire racks 10 minutes. Sprinkle with additional powdered sugar.

MAKES 3 1/2 dozen. **HANDS-ON** 1 hour; **TOTAL** 1 hour, 30 min.

CITRUS MINTS

Use powdered sugar to keep the dough from sticking to your hands.

4 oz. cream cheese
2 Tbsp. butter
1 lb. powdered sugar
1/4 tsp. peppermint extract
1/2 tsp. lime zest
1/2 tsp. lemon zest

Heat first 2 ingredients in a saucepan over low heat, stirring constantly, until mixture is smooth. Remove from heat. Gradually add powdered sugar, stirring to blend. Stir in peppermint extract and zests. Divide mixture into 8 portions, and roll each into a 12-inch rope. Cut into 1/2-inch pieces. Let stand 4 hours.

MAKES about 13 dozen. **HANDS-ON** 30 min.; **TOTAL** 4 hours, 30 min.



**HIDDEN KISS
COOKIES**



CITRUS MINTS

Recipe, page 134



**RED VELVET
FUDGE**

Recipe, page 134



**POTATO
CANDY**

Recipe, page 137



POTATO CANDY

This old-school candy reminds us of divinity and other traditional homemade Southern sweets. The recipe is a testament to the genius of thrifty cooks who based the confection on leftover mashed potatoes.

1/3 cup peeled, cooked, and mashed russet potato, cold (about 1 large potato)
1 Tbsp. milk
1 tsp. vanilla extract
1/8 tsp. table salt
6 to 7 cups powdered sugar
1/3 cup creamy peanut butter

1. Beat mashed potato and next 3 ingredients at medium speed with a heavy-duty electric mixer 2 minutes. Beat in 6 cups powdered sugar, 1 cup at a time. Add up to 1 cup powdered sugar, 1 Tbsp. at a time, to form dough. **2.** Gather dough into a ball; dust with powdered sugar. Roll to 1/8 inch thick on parchment paper, and cut into a 12- x 10-inch rectangle. Generously sprinkle powdered sugar over dough, and place a piece of parchment paper over rectangle. Invert rectangle; discard parchment paper on top. **3.** Spread peanut butter over dough. Starting at 1 long side, tightly roll up candy, jelly-roll fashion, using parchment paper as a guide. Wrap in parchment paper, and freeze 1 hour. Cut into 1/4-inch-thick slices, and serve. Refrigerate sliced candy in an airtight container up to 1 week.

MAKES about 3 dozen. **HANDS-ON** 30 min.; **TOTAL** 1 hour, 30 min.



CHRISTMAS COOKIE COUNTDOWN

We're revealing a new cookie video every day at southernliving.com/countdown.

Christmas Cookie Puzzles

FAMILY FUN

DON'T BE SURPRISED IF YOU HAVE AS MUCH FUN AS YOUR LITTLE ELVES AS YOU MAKE THIS KID-FRIENDLY PROJECT. IT'S GUARANTEED TO BECOME A NEW CHRISTMAS TRADITION

Choose cutters with simple shapes; they're easier to handle and less likely to break. If you want to make small puzzles, cut dough into 4-inch squares, and use a single cookie cutter to punch out the center of each square while still hot from the oven. Working quickly, cut lines from edges of square to form puzzle pieces. Store icing in an airtight container at room temperature up to 1 week.

3/4 cup butter, softened
3/4 cup granulated sugar
1 large egg
1 1/2 tsp. vanilla extract
2 cups all-purpose flour
1/4 tsp. table salt
2 lb. powdered sugar
4 tsp. meringue powder
10 to 14 Tbsp. warm water
Food coloring
Coarse sanding sugar, nonpareils, dragées (optional)

1. Beat first 2 ingredients at medium speed with an electric mixer until creamy. Add egg and vanilla; beat until blended. **2.** Sift together flour and salt. Gradually add flour mixture to butter mixture, in 2 batches, beating on low speed until just combined after each addition. Flatten dough into 2 rectangles, and wrap in plastic wrap. Chill 2 hours to 3 days. **3.** Preheat oven to 350°. Place dough on floured parchment paper, and roll to 1/4-inch thickness. Cut into a 7- x 7 1/2-inch rectangle, reserving scraps. Transfer parchment to a baking sheet, and bake 7



minutes. Rotate pan front to back, and bake 7 more minutes or until edges begin to brown.

4. Immediately slide parchment with cookie onto a flat surface. Cut through cooked, soft dough with a small cookie cutter. Cut straight lines from shapes to rectangle edges to form puzzle pieces. Transfer parchment paper with cookies to wire rack. Gently separate puzzle pieces. Cool completely. Repeat with remaining dough.

5. Beat powdered sugar, meringue powder, and 10 Tbsp. warm water at high speed 5 minutes or until glossy. Stir in up to 4 Tbsp. warm water, 1 tsp. at a time, until mixture

reaches desired consistency. Stir in desired food coloring.

6. Pipe a thin border of icing around edge of each cookie piece. Fill center of cookie with an even layer of icing. Swirl a wooden pick in a circle around the entire pool of icing, starting at the edges and moving toward the center. Let cookies stand 30 minutes or until icing is dry before decorating with another color on top of base color.

Note: For crisp cookies, return dough immediately to oven after cutting in Step 4, and bake 3 minutes or until golden.

MAKES 3 cookie puzzles. **HANDS-ON** 1 hour, 30 min.; **TOTAL** 5 hours



Assemble a Showstopping Cookie Platter

THINK OF YOUR PLATTER LIKE A CLOCK AND YOU'LL HAVE AN ARTFUL PRESENTATION IN ABOUT A MINUTE



STEP 1

Begin with the tan and light beige cookies, grouping them at roughly twelve, four, and eight on the imaginary clock that is your platter.



STEP 2

Next, fill in with brown (dark chocolate) and white (sugared or frosted) cookies in a clockwise pattern to add neutral color.



STEP 3

Fill in the last few open slots with colorful cookies, making sure to balance the platter with pops of bright color.



STEP 4

Save the prettiest, most special cookies for the prominent spots on the platter. Dot with holiday candies for a final touch.



Have yourself a merry little Cookie Decorating Party!

Classic Domino® Sugar Cookies

4 cups sifted all-purpose flour
2 tsp baking powder
1 tsp salt
1 1/2 sticks (12 tbsp) butter or
margarine, softened
1 1/2 cups Domino® Granulated
Sugar
2 eggs
1 1/2 tsp vanilla extract
Domino® Confectioners Sugar,
for dusting

Preheat oven to 350°F. Sift
together flour, baking powder and
salt; set aside.

In a large bowl, cream butter and
sugar until fluffy. Add eggs and
vanilla, beat well. Stir in dry
ingredients, a third at a time,
until incorporated for a smooth,
stiff dough.

Using waxed paper lightly dusted
with confectioners' sugar, roll
out dough to 1/4 inch thick. Cut
shapes with cookie cutters. Trim
away excess dough. Using a
spatula, transfer to cookie sheets.
Repeat with remaining dough.

Bake 10 minutes or until edges are
golden brown. Remove from
cookie sheet and allow to cool
completely before decorating.

Yields 6 dozen cookies.



Invite Your Friends



Make Your Own Sprinkles



Decorator Icing Recipe

Domino® Sugar has everything you
need to host a Holiday Cookie
Decorating Party with your friends.



Join us on Pinterest for a board full of
neat ideas, like how to make your own
glitter sprinkles. Get a free invite to e-mail
to friends and discover super yummy and
easy cookie recipes.

Find it all on our website or at
pinterest.com/realdominosugar.

- * Fun Recipes
- * Gift Tags
- * Invitations
- * How-to Baking Videos
- * Pretty Gift Ideas

the *Real Way*
to do the
Holidays!



dominosugar.com/cookieparty

Ode to a Cookie Tin

BY HANNAH HAYES

The shiny toys, new sweaters, and bow-laden sedans parked in snow-covered driveways—they're all well and good. But sometimes all you need is a tin filled with sugar, butter, flour, and a chorus of sprinkles to make a heart sing. Between the gentle folds of wax paper and layers of royal icing is where you will find happiness and cheer, love and dreams to share, as that Charlie Brown Christmas song goes. But the cookie tin was not born of sentimental circumstances. Bumpy railroad rides that transported fragile, individually packaged foods (a 19th-century novelty) in Britain demanded a sturdy vessel, and the British happened to control most of the world's tin ore supply. Efficiency gave way to beauty, and tins became works of art stamped with elaborate patterns and illustrations. Tins have a tendency to take on lives of their own beyond their intended purpose. They become jewelry boxes or crayon catchalls. But no matter whom they're from or what they become, they never lose the memories we pack inside them.



PACKING TIPS

BE CHOOSY

Delicate or intricately shaped cookies aren't built for traveling. Slice-and-bake or drop cookies are more durable and more likely to survive the journey.

SIZE UP

Pick a tin or sturdy decorative container that is spacious enough for your cookies as well as any cushioning materials that will protect them while in transit.

PACK TIGHTLY

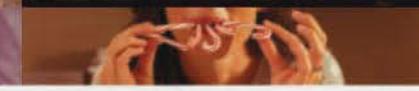
When shipping fragile goodies, tuck each cookie into a cellophane bag. Wrap each with tissue paper or bubble wrap. Pad the tin and spaces between cookies with wax paper or tissue paper.

DOUBLE DOWN

Once the cookies are snug inside their container, place it in a shipping box. Be sure to cushion the box on all sides to keep the cookies from shifting.

SEND SWIFTLY

To guarantee that your cookies arrive fresh and full of cheer (and flavor), choose overnight shipping or second-day at the longest. ☺



Chocolate-Candy Cane Cake

Just one of the many holiday recipes available at JelloRecipes.com

- 1 pkg. (2-layer size) chocolate cake mix
- 1 pkg. (3.9 oz.) JELL-O Chocolate Instant Pudding
- 4 eggs
- 1 container (8 oz.) BREAKSTONE'S or KNUDSEN Sour Cream
- 1/2 cup oil
- 1/2 cup water
- 1/4 cup milk
- 1 pkg. (4 oz.) BAKER'S Semi-Sweet Chocolate, chopped
- 18 small candy canes, coarsely crushed (about 1 cup), divided
- 1 tub (8 oz.) COOL WHIP Whipped Topping, thawed

PREP: 20 min. MAKES: 18 servings

- 1 HEAT oven to 350°F.
- 2 BEAT first 7 ingredients in large bowl with mixer until blended. Stir in chopped chocolate and 2 Tbsp. crushed candy. Pour into 2 (9-inch) round pans sprayed with cooking spray.
- 3 BAKE 35 to 40 min. or until toothpick inserted in centers

comes out clean. Cool in pans 10 min. Loosen cakes from sides of pans; invert onto wire racks. Carefully remove pans. Cool cakes completely.

- 4 FILL and frost cakes with COOL WHIP. Sprinkle with remaining crushed candy just before serving. Keep refrigerated.



JELL-O



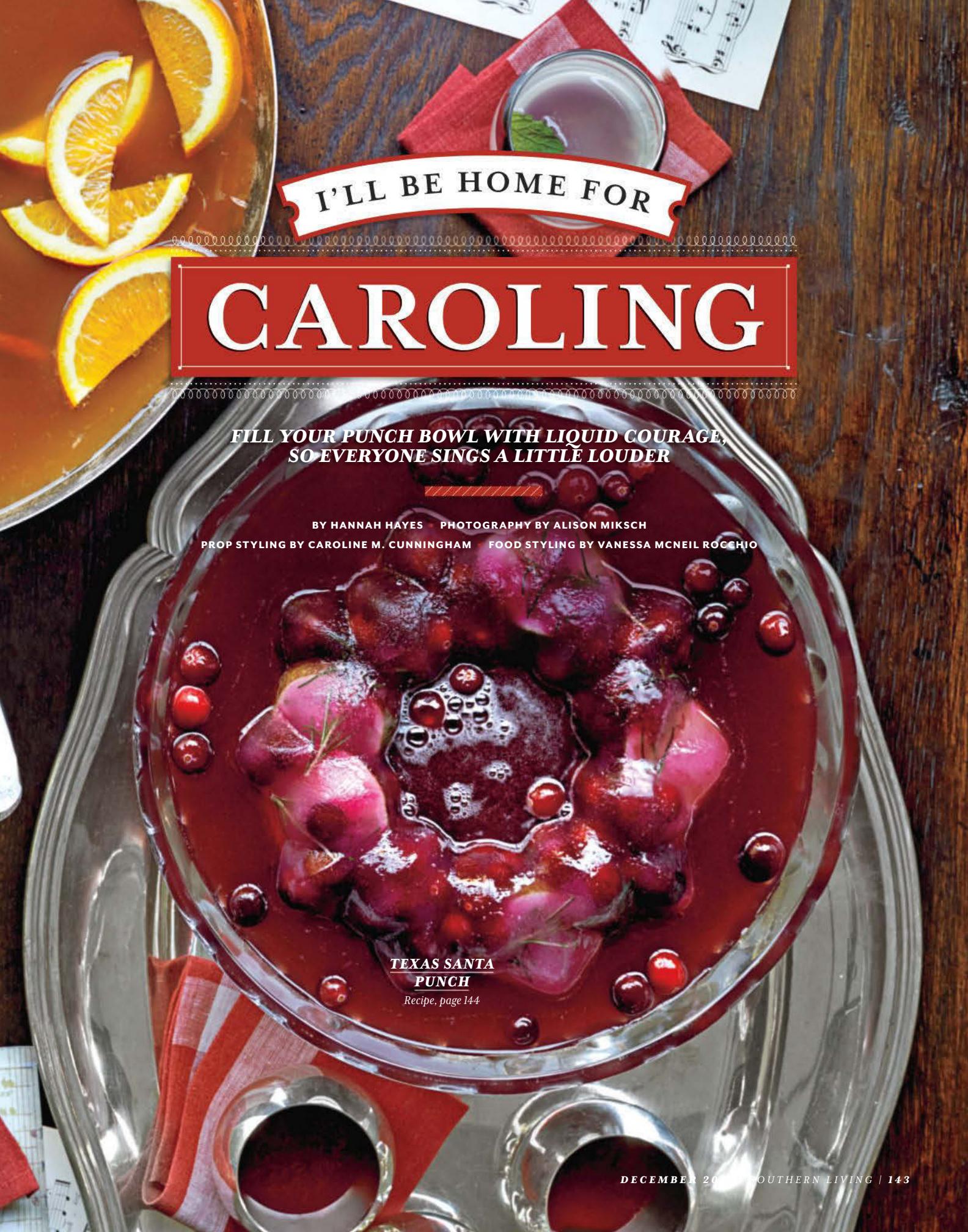


**SORGHUM-
CIDER PUNCH**

Recipe, page 144

**LEMON-GIN
FIZZY PUNCH**

Recipe, page 144



I'LL BE HOME FOR

CAROLING

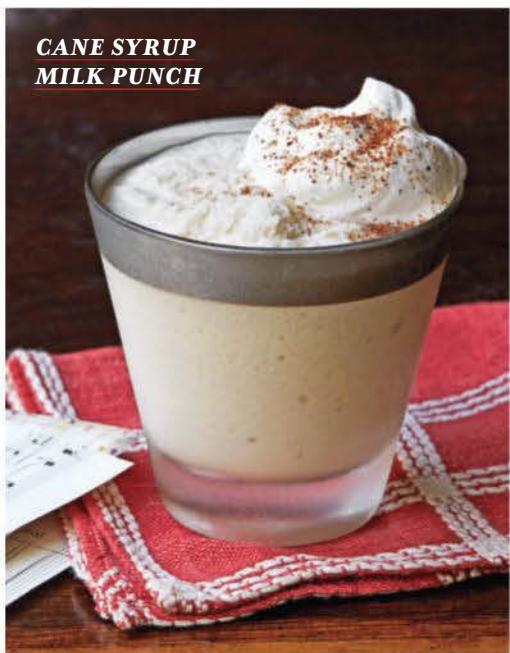
FILL YOUR PUNCH BOWL WITH LIQUID COURAGE,
SO EVERYONE SINGS A LITTLE LOUDER

BY HANNAH HAYES • PHOTOGRAPHY BY ALISON MIKSCH

PROP STYLING BY CAROLINE M. CUNNINGHAM • FOOD STYLING BY VANESSA MCNEIL ROCCHIO

**TEXAS SANTA
PUNCH**

Recipe, page 144



CANE SYRUP MILK PUNCH

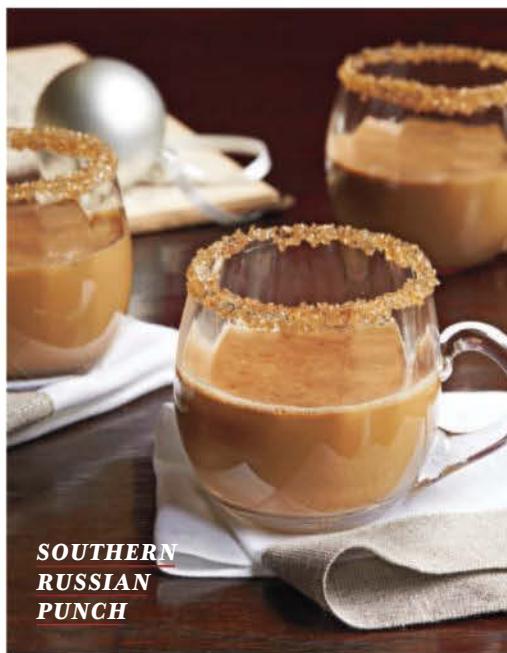
CANE SYRUP MILK PUNCH

Bittersweet cane syrup takes the edge off of this bourbon-lovers' New Orleans-style frozen punch. Make it ahead, and freeze for up to a week. The boozy punch doesn't freeze rock solid, so just set it out as your first guests arrive. Simply give it a quick stir to create an ideal slushy consistency. Keep the punch cold by serving in a chilled metal bowl.

2 1/2 qt. milk
4 cups bourbon
2 1/2 cups heavy cream
1 cup cane syrup
1/4 cup vanilla extract
 Garnishes: sweetened whipped cream, freshly grated nutmeg

Whisk together first 5 ingredients in a freezer-safe container. Cover and freeze 8 to 12 hours. Remove punch from freezer just before serving; stir until desired consistency is reached. Transfer to a chilled metal punch bowl.

MAKES about 1 gal. **HANDS-ON** 5 min.; **TOTAL** 8 hours, 5 min.



SOUTHERN RUSSIAN PUNCH

SOUTHERN RUSSIAN PUNCH

Try Cathead Hoodoo Chicory Liqueur from Jackson, Mississippi, to boost the bold chicory flavor. If you can't find chicory coffee, use any strong brewed coffee to make this riff on a White Russian. Rim the cups in turbinado sugar before ladling in the punch.

1 cup firmly packed dark brown sugar
12 cups hot strong brewed chicory coffee
6 cups half-and-half
2 cups vodka
1 cup chicory liqueur
1 Tbsp. vanilla extract

Stir together brown sugar and 1 cup water in a medium saucepan. Bring to a boil over high heat. Remove from heat, and cool 10 minutes. Stir together coffee, next 4 ingredients, and 1/2 cup brown sugar syrup in a punch bowl. (Reserve remaining brown sugar syrup for another use.) Serve punch warm.

MAKES about 5 qt. **HANDS-ON** 10 min.; **TOTAL** 20 min.

SORGHUM-CIDER PUNCH

Fizzy hard cider and spicy ginger ale add a subtle effervescence. Start with chilled beverages so it's nice and refreshing, and consider adding a decorative ice ring to keep it that way.

6 1/2 cups chilled unfiltered apple juice
3 (12-oz.) bottles chilled ginger ale
2 (12-oz.) bottles chilled dry hard cider
2 cups bourbon
1/4 cup fresh lemon juice
1/4 cup sorghum syrup
6 dashes of Angostura bitters
 Garnishes: orange slices, cinnamon sticks

Stir together first 7 ingredients until well blended.

Note: We tested with Blenheim Ginger Ale and Angry Orchard Traditional Dry Hard Cider.

MAKES about 1 gal. **HANDS-ON** 15 min., **TOTAL** 15 min.

LEMON-GIN FIZZY PUNCH

We prefer a more botanical-tasting gin like Bristow in this punch.

2 cups sugar
4 fresh mint sprigs
1 vanilla bean, split
1 (750-ml.) bottle gin
1 3/4 cups fresh lemon juice
1 (750-ml.) bottle dry sparkling wine, chilled
 Garnishes: fresh mint leaves, citrus slices

TEXAS SANTA PUNCH

Use no-sugar-added pomegranate juice and dry sparkling wine so the punch won't be too sweet. Freshly squeezed lime juice is best. Float frozen cranberries and an ice ring in the punch bowl for a festive chill.

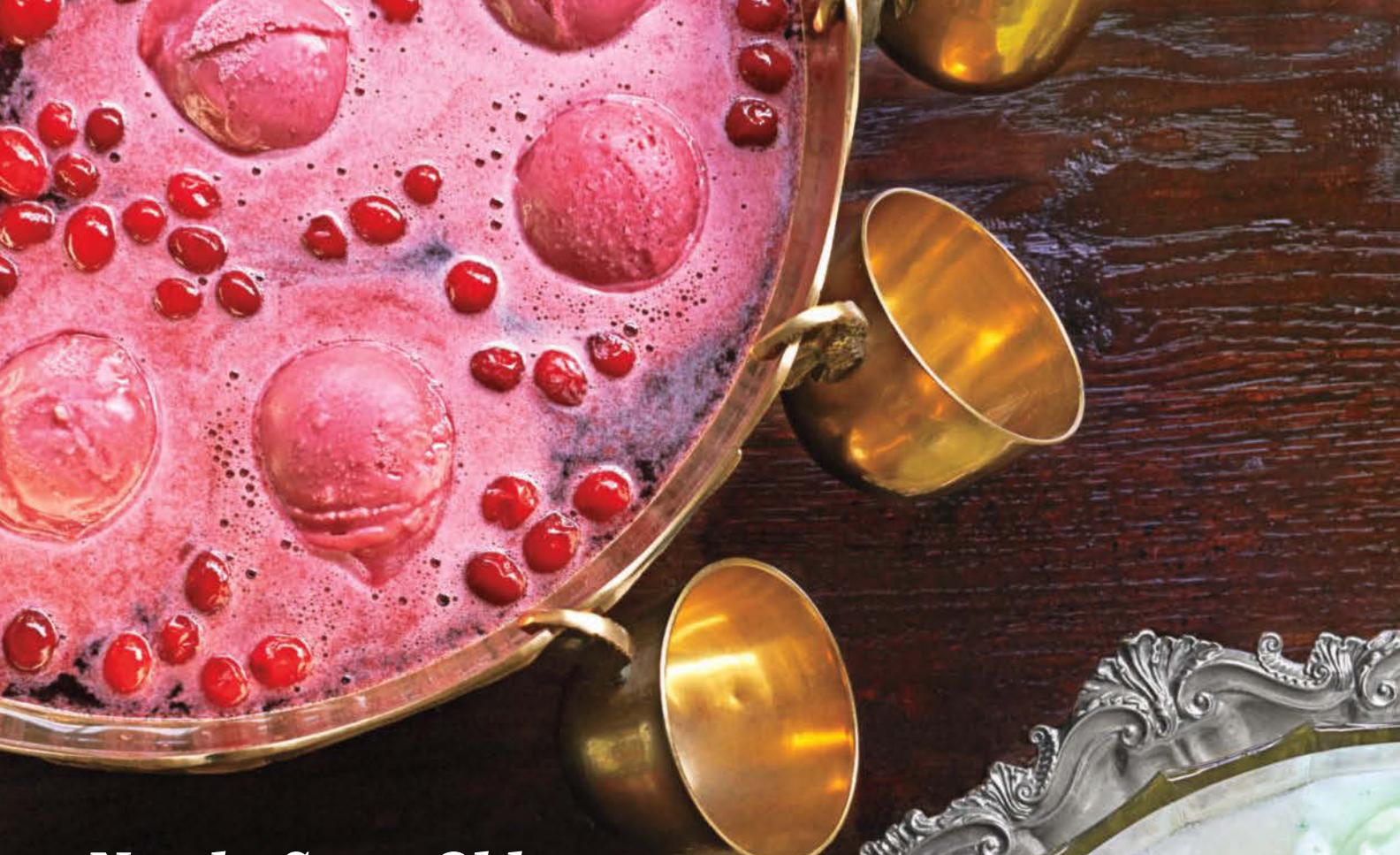
1 cup sugar
1 qt. pomegranate juice
3 cups blanco tequila
1 cup fresh lime juice
1 cup cranberry juice
1 (750-ml.) bottle dry sparkling wine, chilled

1. Bring sugar and 1 cup water to a boil in a small saucepan over high heat, stirring constantly. Boil, stirring constantly, 5 minutes or until sugar dissolves. Cool syrup completely (about 45 minutes).
2. Stir together pomegranate juice, next 3 ingredients, and simple syrup; chill 4 hours. Pour mixture into a punch bowl, and gently stir in sparkling wine just before serving.

Note: We tested with Ocean Spray 100% Cranberry Juice.

MAKES 3 3/4 qt. **HANDS-ON** 30 min.; **TOTAL** 5 hours, 15 min.

1. Stir together sugar and 2 cups water in a microwave-safe bowl; microwave at HIGH 5 minutes. Stir to dissolve sugar. Add mint and vanilla bean; cool completely. Discard mint and vanilla bean.
2. Stir together gin, lemon juice, 2 cups water, and 2 1/2 cups mint-vanilla syrup. Cover and chill 4 hours. Combine gin mixture and sparkling wine in a large punch bowl.
MAKES 3 1/2 qt. **HANDS-ON** 20 min.; **TOTAL** 5 hours, 5 min.



Not the Same Old Sherbet Standby

CRAN-RASPBERRY-VANILLA PUNCH

Be sure to add the raspberry sorbet right before you serve this festive nonalcoholic choice.

- 6 cups 100% cranberry-raspberry juice
- 6 cups sparkling cranberry-flavored beverage
- 1 Tbsp. vanilla extract
- 1 pt. raspberry sorbet

Garnish: frozen whole cranberries

Stir together first 3 ingredients in a large punch bowl; scoop sorbet into punch. Serve immediately.

Note: We tested with Ocean Spray Sparkling Cranberry Flavored Beverage.

MAKES about 3 1/2 qt. **HANDS-ON** 10 min., **TOTAL** 10 min.

LEMON-LIME-ROSEMARY PUNCH

Rosemary and lemon elevate this church basement classic to a higher level.

- 6 cups limeade
- 6 cups lemon-lime soft drink
- 1 pt. lemon sorbet
- 1 pt. lime sherbet
- 2 to 3 fresh rosemary sprigs

Garnishes: lemon and lime slices

Stir together first 2 ingredients in a large punch bowl. Scoop sorbet and sherbet into punch; add fresh rosemary sprigs. Serve immediately.

MAKES about 3 qt. **HANDS-ON** 10 min., **TOTAL** 10 min.





WHITE CAKE 3 WAYS

Use one versatile cake recipe to build one or all three of our showstopping snowy cakes. (For sourcing info on cards shown, see page 157.)

WHITE CAKE WITH BOURBON BUTTERCREAM AND SEVEN-MINUTE FROSTING

Recipe, page 153

WHITE CAKE WITH PEPPERMINT FROSTING

Recipe, page 150



Photo: Michael Krautter

I'LL BE HOME FOR

CARDS AND CAKE

GATHER WITH FRIENDS, AND MAKE FUN WORK OF
ADDRESSING YOUR HOLIDAY CARDS THIS YEAR.

SET OUT A SWEET BUFFET FEATURING OUR BIG WHITE CAKE,
WITH BUBBLY AND COFFEE TO KEEP THE PARTY LIVELY

BY PAM LOLLEY • PHOTOGRAPHY BY HECTOR SANCHEZ

PROP STYLING BY HEATHER CHADDUCK HILLEGAS • FOOD STYLING BY MARIAN COOPER CAIRNS

**WHITE CAKE
WITH CRANBERRY
FILLING AND
ORANGE
BUTTERCREAM**
Recipe, page 153



**WHITE CAKE WITH
PEPPERMINT FROSTING
AND PEPPERMINT
MERINGUE COOKIES**

Recipes, pages 130 and 150



YOU CAN ORDER IT!

No time to bake? Order our Southern Living 2014 White Cake with Peppermint Frosting today from Eilenberger's (ellenbergerbakery.com) for \$59.95 + shipping. (Comes with a fondant bow and instructions and materials for fondant ribbon.) Use SL order code: SL1420

1-800-831-2544

**WHITE CAKE WITH
PEPPERMINT
FROSTING AND
FONDANT BOW**

Recipe and how-to, page 150



WHITE CAKE 3 WAYS

White cake is a *Southern Living* Christmas tradition. This year we present three cakes wrapped into one. Bake the Basic White Cake, and then decide which filling and frosting you'd like best.

BASIC WHITE CAKE

A moist cake perfect for layering.

1 cup butter, softened
2 cups sugar
1 Tbsp. loosely packed orange zest
1 tsp. vanilla extract
3 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
1 Tbsp. baking powder
1/4 tsp. table salt
1 cup milk
8 large egg whites
Shortening

1. Preheat oven to 325°. Beat butter at medium speed with an electric stand mixer until creamy. Gradually add sugar, beating until light and fluffy. Add orange zest and vanilla; beat until blended. Combine flour and next 2 ingredients; add to butter mixture alternately with milk, beginning and ending with flour mixture. Beat at low speed just until blended after each addition.

2. Beat egg whites at high speed until stiff peaks form. Stir egg whites into batter in 3 batches. Spoon into 3 greased (with shortening) and floured 9-inch round cake pans.

3. Bake at 325° for 25 minutes or until a wooden pick inserted in center comes out clean. Cool in pans on wire racks 10 minutes; remove from pans to wire racks, and cool completely (about 1 hour). Frost as desired.

Note: Cake layers may be baked in 3 (8-inch) square disposable aluminum foil pans. Increase bake time to 26 to 30 minutes.

MAKES 3 (9-inch) cake layers. **HANDS-ON** 30 min.; **TOTAL** 2 hours, 15 min.

WHITE CAKE 1

WITH PEPPERMINT FROSTING

Garnish with a fondant bow or Peppermint Meringue Cookies (page 130). For the cover look, buy 1 lb. each of red and white rolled fondant from the cake section of a crafts store. Roll a thin red strip, and follow our steps below for the bow. Dust your countertop with cornstarch or powdered sugar to prevent sticking.

1 cup butter, softened
8 oz. cream cheese, softened
1/4 tsp. table salt
1 tsp. vanilla extract
1/2 tsp. peppermint extract
32 oz. powdered sugar
2 to 3 Tbsp. milk
12 hard peppermint candies
Basic White Cake layers

1. Beat first 3 ingredients at medium speed with an electric mixer until creamy. Beat in

extracts. Gradually add powdered sugar alternately with 2 Tbsp. milk. Beat at low speed until blended and smooth after each addition. Add up to 1 Tbsp. milk, 1 tsp. at a time, beating until frosting reaches desired consistency.

2. Reserve 2 cups frosting in a small bowl. Process peppermint candies in a food processor until finely crushed. Stir 1/4 cup crushed candies into reserved 2 cups frosting.

3. Place 1 Basic White Cake layer on a serving platter. Spread 1 cup peppermint candy frosting mixture over cake layer. Top with second layer, and spread remaining 1 cup peppermint candy frosting over cake layer. Top with third cake layer, and spread top and sides of cake with remaining plain peppermint frosting. Sprinkle with remaining crushed candies, or top with meringues or fondant bow.

MAKES 10 to 12 servings. **HANDS-ON** 30 min.; **TOTAL** 2 hours, 45 min., including cake layers

MAKE THE BOW

Create a Cover-Worthy Cake Garnish

OUR PEPPERMINT COVER CAKE IS DELICIOUS AND SIMPLE TO PREPARE. MAKE IT REALLY SPECTACULAR BY ADDING A FONDANT BOW TOPPER. IT'S EASY TO ASSEMBLE, BUT START AT LEAST ONE DAY AHEAD TO LET THE BOW DRY.



ROLL LONG STRIPS

You need a rolling pin, pizza wheel, ruler, and red and white fondant. Roll a chunk of red and chunk of white fondant into two long strips (about 1/8 inch thick). Using ruler and pizza wheel, cut white fondant into thin strips.



MAKE STRIPED RIBBON

Moisten finger with water; rub one side of one thin white strip. Place strip, moist side down, on red to form a stripe. Repeat with two to three white strips. Roll gently with rolling pin. Repeat as needed to make more ribbons.



CUT, SHAPE, DRY

Cut two identical ribbons for tails. Place foil under tails to create folds. Form loops of bow by wrapping ribbon around a cardboard roll, leaving 1/4 inch excess on ends. Pinch ends. Cut a small rectangle for knot. Let dry 24 hours.



ASSEMBLE BOW

Place bow tails on cake, draping down sides. Place bow loops over ribbon on top of cake (loop ends touching). Tip loops at an angle, and press gently into frosting to secure. Cover seam with knot, using frosting as glue, if needed.



**GINGERBREAD CAKE
WITH BUTTERMILK
FROSTING**

Recipe, page 157



**MEXICAN
HOT CHOCOLATE
TRIFLE**



2 W H I T E C A K E

WITH CRANBERRY FILLING AND ORANGE BUTTERCREAM

FILLING

- 1 (12-oz.) jar cherry preserves
- 3/4 cup granulated sugar
- 1/4 cup fresh orange juice
- 3 1/2 cups fresh cranberries*

BUTTERCREAM

- 1 cup butter, softened
- 1 (8-oz.) package cream cheese, softened
- 1/4 tsp. table salt
- 1 (32-oz.) package powdered sugar
- 2 Tbsp. fresh orange juice
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract
- 1 to 2 Tbsp. milk (optional)

ADDITIONAL INGREDIENT

Basic White Cake layers

1. Prepare Filling: Bring first 3 ingredients and 3 cups cranberries to a boil in a medium saucepan over medium-high heat. Boil, stirring often, 5 to 6 minutes or until cranberries begin to pop. Transfer 1 cup cranberry mixture to a small bowl, and stir in remaining 1/2 cup whole cranberries. (This will be the Cranberry Topping.) Transfer remaining hot Cranberry Filling mixture to another small bowl. Cool both mixtures completely (1 hour). Cover; chill 8 hours.

2. Prepare Buttercream: Beat butter and next 2 ingredients at medium speed with an electric mixer 1 to 2 minutes or until creamy. Gradually add powdered sugar alternately with orange juice. Beat at low speed until blended and smooth after each addition. Stir in vanilla. If desired, add 1 to 2 Tbsp. milk, 1 tsp. at a time, beating until frosting reaches desired consistency.

3. Place 1 Basic White Cake layer on a serving platter. Spoon 1 1/2 cups buttercream into a zip-top plastic freezer bag. Snip 1 corner

of bag to make a small hole. Pipe a ring of frosting around cake layer just inside the top edge. Spread cake layer with half of chilled Cranberry Filling (without whole berries), spreading to edge of piped frosting. Top with second cake layer. Repeat procedure with frosting and remaining Cranberry Filling (without whole berries). Top with third layer. Spread remaining buttercream over top and sides of cake. Pipe a ring of frosting around top cake layer just inside the top edge. Spread Cranberry Topping (with whole berries) over top cake layer, spreading to edge of piped frosting.

*Frozen cranberries, thawed, may be substituted.

MAKES 10 servings. **HANDS-ON** 45 min.; **TOTAL** 11 hours, including cake layers

3 W H I T E C A K E

WITH BOURBON BUTTERCREAM AND SEVEN-MINUTE FROSTING

BUTTERCREAM

- 1/2 cup butter, softened
- 1 (16-oz.) package powdered sugar
- 3 1/2 Tbsp. milk
- 2 Tbsp. bourbon
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract
- 2 dashes of bitters

ADDITIONAL INGREDIENT

Basic White Cake layers

FROSTING

- 2 large egg whites
- 1 1/2 cups sugar
- 1/8 tsp. salt
- 2 tsp. light corn syrup
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract

GARNISHES

Sugar-Coated Orange Slices
Sparkling Cherries

1. Prepare Buttercream: Beat butter in a medium bowl at

medium speed with an electric mixer until creamy. Gradually add powdered sugar, beating at low speed until blended after each addition. Gradually add milk and next 3 ingredients, beating at low speed until blended. Increase speed to medium, and beat 1 to 2 minutes or until smooth.

2. Place 1 Basic White Cake layer on a serving platter. Spread half of buttercream over cake layer. Top with second layer, and spread remaining buttercream over cake layer. Top with third cake layer.

3. Prepare Frosting: Pour water to a depth of 1 1/2 inches into bottom of a double boiler over medium heat; bring to a boil. Stir together egg whites, next 3 ingredients, and 1/2 cup water in top of double boiler; beat at low speed with a handheld electric mixer until blended. Place top of double boiler over boiling water, and increase mixer speed to high. Beat 7 minutes or until soft glossy peaks form and frosting is spreading consistency. Remove from heat, and stir in vanilla. Spread immediately over top and sides of cake.

MAKES 10 to 12 servings. **HANDS-ON** 45 min.; **TOTAL** 3 hours, including cake layers but not including garnishes

Sugar-Coated Orange Slices

Cut 2 medium **oranges** into thin slices. Stir together 1 cup **sugar**, 1/4 cup **bourbon**, 1/4 cup **water**, and 2 tsp. fresh **lemon juice** in a deep, 10-inch skillet. Cook over medium heat, whisking occasionally, 3 to 5 minutes or just until sugar dissolves. Add orange slices in a single layer, and simmer 10 minutes. Turn slices over, and simmer 5 more minutes or until tender. Remove orange slices, 1 at a time, shaking off excess syrup. Transfer to a wire rack, and let dry completely (about 4 hours).

MAKES about 16 slices. **HANDS-ON** 15 min.; **TOTAL** 4 hours, 30 min.

Sparkling Cherries

Drain 1 (10-oz.) jar **maraschino cherries** with stems, and return cherries to jar. Pour 1/2 cup **bourbon** into jar, and add just enough **water** to cover cherries. Cover with lid, and chill 8 hours. Drain cherries, and arrange in a single layer on paper towels.

Sprinkle 1 envelope **unflavored gelatin** over 1/4 cup water in a small saucepan; let stand 2 minutes. Cook over low heat, stirring often, 5 minutes or just until gelatin dissolves. Transfer gelatin to a small bowl; whisk until foamy. Dip cherries, 1 at a time, in gelatin, shaking off excess. Sprinkle cherries with 3/4 cup **sugar**; transfer to **wax paper**, and let dry completely (about 3 hours).

MAKES 10-oz. **HANDS-ON** 20 min.; **TOTAL** 8 hours, 20 min.

MEXICAN HOT CHOCOLATE TRIFLE

Top this rich trifle with a sprinkle of chocolate curls.

6 oz. unsweetened baking chocolate, chopped

3/4 cup butter, softened

1 1/2 cups granulated sugar

1 1/2 cups firmly packed light brown sugar

3 large eggs, separated

1 Tbsp. vanilla extract

2 3/4 cups cake flour

1/4 cup unsweetened cocoa

1 Tbsp. baking powder

1 tsp. ground cinnamon

3/4 tsp. table salt

2 1/4 cups milk

Chocolate Ganache

Marshmallow Topping

1. Preheat oven to 350°. Microwave chopped chocolate in a small microwave-safe bowl at MEDIUM (50% power) 1 minute; stir. Microwave 2 to 2 1/2 more minutes or until melted, stirring every 30 seconds. Beat butter at medium speed with a heavy-duty electric stand mixer until creamy;

gradually add granulated sugar and brown sugar, beating well. Add egg yolks, 1 at a time, beating until blended after each addition. Add melted chocolate and vanilla, beating at low speed just until blended.

2. Sift cake flour with next 4 ingredients in a medium bowl. Add flour mixture to butter mixture alternately with milk, beginning and ending with flour mixture. Beat at low speed just until blended after each addition. Wash and dry beaters.

3. Beat egg whites at high speed until stiff peaks form. Stir egg whites into batter in 3 batches. Spoon batter into 3 greased (with butter) and floured 9-inch round cake pans.

4. Bake at 350° for 30 minutes or until a wooden pick inserted in center comes out clean. Cool in pans on wire racks 10 minutes; remove from pans to parchment paper-lined wire racks, and cool completely (about 1 hour). Cut cake layers into 1-inch cubes.

5. Layer one-third of cake cubes in a 4-qt. bowl. Top with one-third each of Chocolate Ganache and Marshmallow Topping. Repeat layers twice.

MAKES 15 to 20 servings. **HANDS-ON** 40 min.; **TOTAL** 3 hours, including ganache and topping

Chocolate Ganache

3 (4-oz.) semisweet chocolate baking bars, chopped
2 (4-oz.) bittersweet chocolate baking bars, chopped
1 1/2 to **1 3/4** cups heavy cream

Microwave first 2 ingredients and 1 1/2 cups cream in a medium-size microwave-safe bowl at MEDIUM (50% power) 1 minute; stir. Microwave 3 to 3 1/2 more minutes or until melted, stirring every 30 seconds. Stir in up to 1/4 cup cream, 1 Tbsp. at a time, until desired consistency is reached.

Note: Reserve 3/4 cup ganache to serve with trifle. Just before

serving, reheat reserved Chocolate Ganache in a microwave-safe bowl at MEDIUM (50% power) for 30 to 60 seconds, stirring every 30 seconds.

MAKES 3 1/2 cups. **HANDS-ON** 15 min.; **TOTAL** 15 min.

Marshmallow Topping

3 (7 1/2-oz.) jars marshmallow crème
3 cups heavy cream

Beat marshmallow crème and 1 cup heavy cream at low speed with an electric mixer 1 to 1 1/2 minutes or until combined and smooth. Add remaining heavy cream; beat at medium speed 2 minutes or until light and fluffy.

MAKES about 7 cups. **HANDS-ON** 5 min.; **TOTAL** 5 min.

MILK PUNCH TRES LECHES CAKE

Bake this a day before serving so it soaks up the creamy syrup. Make mini cakes with a round cutter. Top with whipped cream and a grating of nutmeg.

1/2 cup butter, softened
1 cup granulated sugar
7 large eggs, separated
2 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
1 1/2 tsp. baking powder
1/2 tsp. table salt
1 cup milk
1 tsp. vanilla extract
Vegetable cooking spray
1 (14-oz.) can sweetened condensed milk
1 (12-oz.) can evaporated milk
1/2 cup coffee liqueur
1 1/2 cups heavy cream
3/4 cup powdered sugar
Garnish: freshly grated nutmeg

1. Preheat oven to 350°. Beat butter at medium speed with an electric mixer until creamy; add granulated sugar, beating until light and fluffy. Add egg

yolks, 1 at a time, beating until blended after each addition. Stir together flour, baking powder, and salt. Add flour mixture to butter mixture alternately with milk, beginning and ending with flour mixture. Beat at low speed until blended after each addition. Scrape bowl as needed. Stir in vanilla. Wash and dry beaters.

2. Beat egg whites at high speed until stiff peaks form. Stir egg whites into batter in 3 batches. Spoon batter into a lightly greased (with cooking spray) 13- x 9-inch pan.

3. Bake at 350° for 23 minutes or until a wooden pick inserted in center comes out clean. Cool in pan on a wire rack 10 minutes.

4. Pierce top of cake several times with a long wooden pick. Whisk together condensed milk, evaporated milk, and liqueur. Gradually pour mixture over warm cake, about 1/2 cup at a time. Allow mixture to soak into cake before adding more. Let cake stand at room temperature 3 hours. Cover and chill 8 to 12 hours.

5. Beat heavy cream and powdered sugar at medium-high speed with an electric mixer until stiff peaks form; spread on cake.

MAKES 16 servings. **HANDS-ON** 45 min.; **TOTAL** 13 hours, 20 min.

COCONUT PUDDING

Try unsweetened coconut flakes for a not-too-sweet topping.

1 cup sugar
5 Tbsp. cornstarch
1/4 tsp. table salt
1 3/4 cups milk
1 1/2 cups heavy cream
1 (13.5-oz.) can unsweetened coconut milk
1/4 cup butter, cut into 1/2-inch pieces
2 tsp. vanilla bean paste
Sweetened whipped cream
Garnish: toasted flaked coconut

1. Whisk together first 3 ingredients in a large heavy saucepan; whisk in milk and next 2 ingredients. Bring mixture to a boil over medium heat, whisking constantly. Boil 1 minute, whisking constantly. Remove from heat.

2. Whisk in butter and vanilla bean paste. Spoon pudding into serving dishes; cover and chill 4 hours. Dollop with sweetened whipped cream.

MAKES about 10 to 12 servings. **HANDS-ON** 20 min.; **TOTAL** 4 hours, 20 min.

AMBROSIA STREUSEL BARS WITH SHORTBREAD CRUST

Use the foil as a handle to remove the cooled batch from the pan for easy slicing.

CRUST

2 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
1/2 cup powdered sugar
1/2 tsp. kosher salt
1/2 tsp. baking powder
1 1/4 cups cold butter, cut into pieces
2 large egg yolks

FILLING

1 1/2 cups fresh pineapple chunks
1 cup orange marmalade
2 Tbsp. granulated sugar
2 Tbsp. fresh lemon juice
2 tsp. cornstarch
1/4 tsp. kosher salt
1/2 cup drained maraschino cherries, coarsely chopped

STREUSEL

1/2 cup granulated sugar
1/2 cup all-purpose flour
1/8 tsp. kosher salt
3 Tbsp. cold butter, cut into pieces
1 cup toasted coconut chips (such as Dang)

1. Prepare Crust: Preheat oven to 400°. Pulse first 4 ingredients in a food processor 2 to 3 times or until combined. Add 1 1/4 cups cold butter pieces, 2 or 3 pieces

GET THE LOOK

Gift this pretty milk glass cake stand to a friend, or buy one for yourself. Find more cake stands, beautiful apothecary jars, pretty ribbon, paper fans pictured on page 151, and other glittery party decor at minted.com.



**MILK PUNCH
TRES LECHES CAKE**

**AMBROSIA
STREUSEL
BARS WITH
SHORTBREAD
CRUST**



**COCONUT
PUDDING**





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at a time, pulsing after each addition. Add egg yolks, 1 at a time, pulsing after each addition. Process until mixture is crumbly. **2.** Line a 13- x 9-inch pan with aluminum foil, extending foil over sides. Butter and flour foil. Press flour mixture into bottom of pan. Bake at 400° for 12 minutes.

3. Prepare Filling: Pulse pineapple in food processor until coarsely chopped. Bring pineapple, marmalade, and next 4 ingredients to a boil in a saucepan over medium-high heat. Boil, stirring often, 1 minute. Remove from heat; let stand 10 minutes. Stir in cherries, and spread in prepared crust.

4. Prepare Streusel: Stir together 1/2 cup granulated sugar and next 2 ingredients; cut butter into sugar mixture with a pastry blender until it resembles coarse meal. Stir in coconut; sprinkle over pineapple mixture.

5. Bake at 400° for 30 minutes or until golden. Cool completely in pan. Lift bars from pan, using foil sides. Cut into squares.

MAKES 12 to 16 squares. **HANDS-ON** 30 min.; **TOTAL** 2 hours, 10 min.

mixture to butter mixture alternately with coffee mixture, beginning and ending with flour mixture. Beat at low speed just until blended. Beat egg whites at high speed until stiff peaks form. Fold egg whites into batter in 3 batches.

3. Spoon batter into 3 greased (with shortening) and floured 8-inch round cake pans. Bake at 350° for 20 minutes or until a wooden pick inserted in center comes out clean. Cool in pans on wire racks 10 minutes; remove from pans. Cool on racks.

4. Spread Buttermilk Frosting between layers and over cake. Garnish with pecans.

MAKES 10 to 12 servings. **HANDS-ON** 30 min.; **TOTAL** 2 hours, 50 min., including frosting and pecans

Buttermilk Frosting

1 cup butter, softened
1 (32-oz.) package powdered sugar
5 to 8 Tbsp. buttermilk
2 Tbsp. fresh lemon juice
1 tsp. vanilla extract
Pinch of salt

Beat butter at medium speed with an electric mixer 1 minute. Gradually add powdered sugar alternately with 5 Tbsp. buttermilk. Beat at low speed until blended. Stir in lemon juice, vanilla, and salt. If desired, add up to 3 Tbsp. buttermilk, 1 Tbsp. at a time; beat to desired consistency.

MAKES 4 1/2 cups. **HANDS-ON** 10 min., **TOTAL** 10 min.

Spiced Glazed Pecans

1/4 cup sugar
1/4 tsp. ground cinnamon
1/4 tsp. ground ginger
1/8 tsp. ground cloves
1 cup coarsely chopped pecans

Combine first 4 ingredients in a heavy saucepan over medium heat. Add pecans, and cook, stirring constantly, 7 minutes or until sugar melts and coats pecans. Spread on greased wax paper, and cool.

MAKES 1 cup. **HANDS-ON** 15 min., **TOTAL** 35 min.

ORDER CARDS pictured on pages 146 and 147 (clockwise from top): **Merry and Bright**, \$24/set of six, nightowlpapergoods.com; **Green Felt Tree**, \$6.50 each, sideshowpress.com; **Santa**, \$15/set of six, chereeberrypaper.com; **Tree with Gold Balls**, \$16/set of eight, giddypaperie.com.

GINGERBREAD CAKE WITH BUTTERMILK FROSTING

Warm spices and molasses blend beautifully with tangy buttermilk frosting.

3 3/4 cups all-purpose flour
1/2 cup chopped crystallized ginger
2 tsp. baking powder
2 tsp. baking soda
1 tsp. ground cinnamon
3/4 tsp. table salt
1/4 tsp. ground cloves
1 cup butter, softened
1 1/2 cups firmly packed light brown sugar
3 large eggs, separated
1 1/2 cups hot strong brewed coffee
3/4 cup light molasses
Shortening
Buttermilk Frosting
Spiced Glazed Pecans

1. Preheat oven to 350°. Process first 7 ingredients in food processor 1 minute or until ginger is finely ground. Beat butter at medium speed with an electric stand mixer until creamy. Add sugar; beat until fluffy. Add egg yolks, 1 at a time; beat until blended after each addition.

2. Combine coffee and molasses. Add flour

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ROLL
INTO BALLS

DIP
IN CHOCOLATE

DECORATE



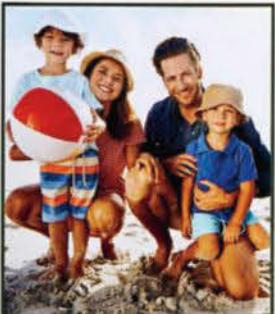
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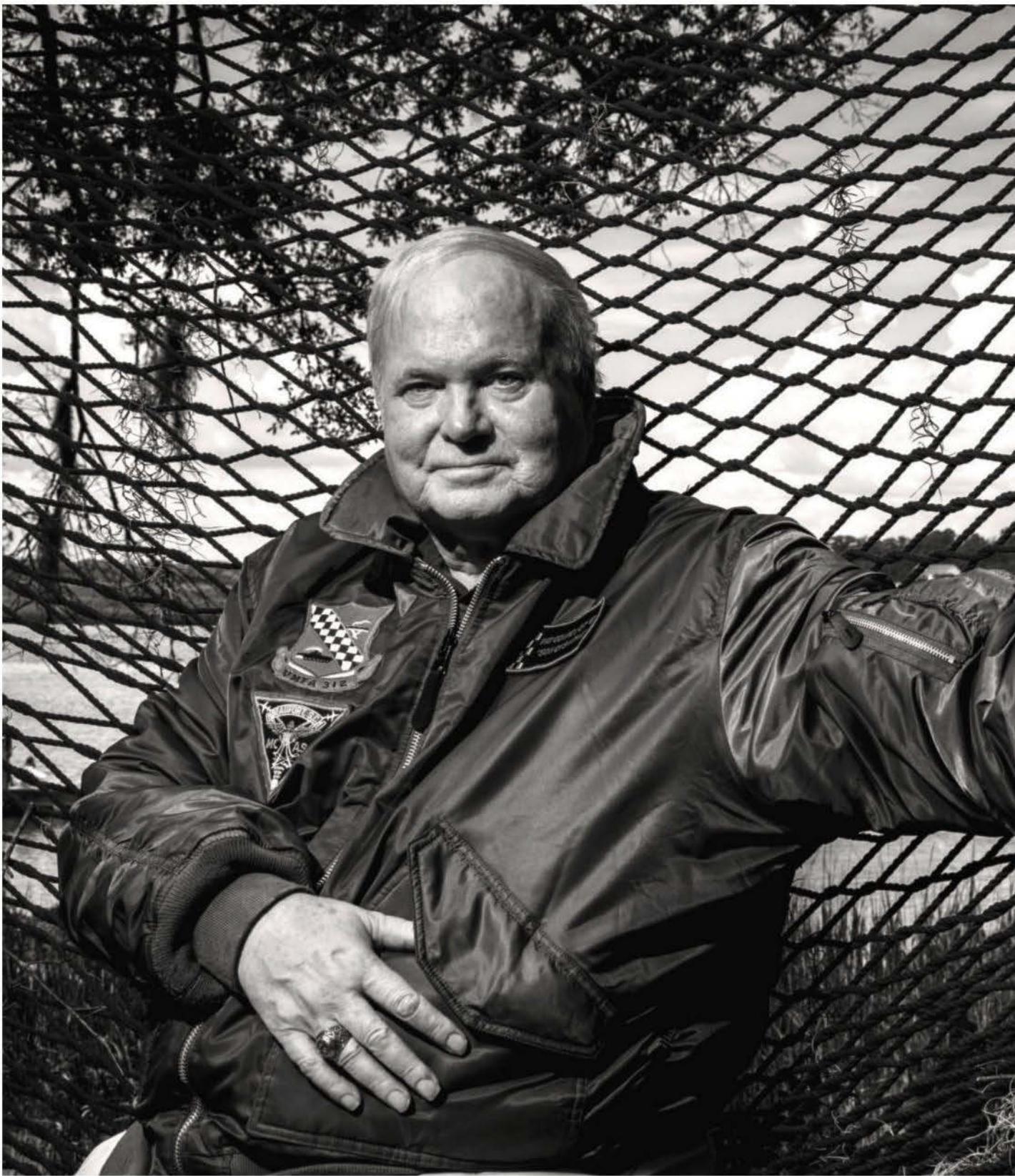
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PAT CONROY'S

CHRISTMAS MEMORIES

PAT CONROY,
author of most recently
The Death of Santini and
My Reading Life, at home
in Beaufort, South Carolina

In my childhood. Christmas was always part of my moveable, nomadic family's military life. In the first fifteen years of my life, before I arrived in Beaufort, South Carolina, the town that would become my homeplace, the Conroy family changed to a new address 23 times. My mother was famous for being a mediocre cook, but mediocrity does not quite cover her contempt for the culinary arts. During her career in the kitchen, her seven children and husband never tasted a fresh shrimp, crab, or fish, even though the saltwater rivers teemed with these creatures as they flowed past the bases where my father flew his warplanes. We never ate an onion, a fresh tomato or cucumber, a bell pepper, an avocado, fresh beans, corn on the cob, okra, collards or turnip greens, beets, or any lettuce not named iceberg. If it had not been for the successful introduction of frozen food to American society, I think Mom might have lost a kid or two to starvation.

But Christmas exerted a magical spell on my parents during their storm-tossed, often violent marriage. I remember every Christmas we ever had with precision and nostalgia. My grandmother once rented a small cabin in the North Georgia mountains where it snowed on Christmas Day and my cousin Clyde Baker from Piedmont, Alabama, shot down enough mistletoe from naked hardwood trees to keep the whole city of Atlanta kissing for a month. My father was flying a Corsair in Korea, and my mother sent him a large sprig of that mistletoe covered with her

PHOTOGRAPH BY JIM HERRINGTON

kisses and the kisses of their two children. Then she read us all a Christmas letter from Dad, telling us how much he loved and missed us and no time more than when he knew we were gathered around a tree with presents piled high and stockings hung by the chimney, and how much he wished he could be there. My mother cried when she read the letter, and I marveled that a man could write words on a piece of paper that could bring tears to a pretty woman's eyes six thousand miles away. Papa Jack, the second of my grandmother's eight husbands, passed out Greek cookies made by a cousin, and the taste of almonds and powdered sugar and butter haunts me to this day. I also lost myself to the power of the mistletoe, a plant you had to shoot out of trees to get people you loved kissing up on you.

As a Marine family, we spent Christmas in a dozen different houses as we made our way up and back along the Southern flyway from Arlington, Virginia, to Quantico, then Cherry Point and Camp Lejeune and New Bern, North Carolina, to Atlanta, and Orlando, Florida. We lacked all roots or family history or a shared homeplace, but Christmas was always a traveling companion we could take on the road with us.

Our dad was a troubling presence always, but Christmas worked a particular magic on our dark-hearted father and Christmas Day turned him into a dreamboat. On that particular day, Dad transformed into the kind of father I used to dream about and all of my brothers and sisters agree. On Christmas Eve, Mom usually cooked her Southern fried chicken, a part of her Southern heritage she performed with the best of them. She and my sister Carol Ann would spend the day making divine pies and cakes. Mom made piecrusts with lard, and the thought of her apple and pumpkin and lemon meringue pies still makes my mouth water in glorious memory.

Then the family would all attend midnight mass, with the showy strut of priests in their seasonal finery that could make a boy believe in the birth of a God. We would return home, and Mom and Dad would send us all scurrying to bed because Santa Claus was due any minute. When I was six, Carol Ann informed me that Santa Claus was fake, and she showed me where Mom hid our gifts. In despair, I ran to my mother, demanding to know why she lied about Santa Claus. She explained with great patience that she'd received a letter from the North Pole from Santa, explaining that he was getting old and would it be all right to deliver gifts early. For three more years, I believed in Santa Claus, even though my sister thought I was a complete dope.

But the shining excitement of my younger brothers and

sisters carried its own power on that long, sleepless night. At 3 a.m., Carol Ann would shake me awake, and we would drift out to the living room where that tree was lit up like a candelabra, and we would sit there stunned by the glittering pile of presents stacked halfway up the tree. The tree itself, with its fragrant scent, covered with the crown jewels of the season, seemed timeless, a bright sentinel that centered a family in constant motion. Those bulbs and flashing lights and that crowning star of the East followed us from base to base, packed in a special box—those are the things we had instead of a home. It was a day that not even the Marine Corps or all the wars in the world could touch.

At five in the morning, Carol Ann, in her rapacious holiday greed, would burst into my parents' room and scream that it was time to open presents. I would race to the kids'

rooms, and they would run out in their pajamas, still half-asleep, and purr with pleasure at the sight of the abundant gifts. Mom and Dad would emerge from their bedroom, and Dad would take his chair of honor and say, "I won't even wake up until I have my first cup of coffee."

Carol Ann would thrust a cup into his hands, while I took a cup to my mother, who usually had an infant in her arms. Dad would moan and stretch and take his time as he sipped his coffee with infuriating slowness. We eyed him prayerfully as he fussed over his coffee, ignoring the entreaties of his greedy kids. Finally, he would slowly bend over and grab a present. He would study the tag as though it were written in the language of Cherokees and say on his one terrific day of the year, "To Tom, from Santa Claus," and a shout of joy would go

up from the children of The Great Santini.

On his last Christmas, the family gathered together at my home on Fripp Island. In the last year of his life, I fed over a hundred of his friends and relatives. In his last days, he would drive over to my house in his flashy red Chevy that his children bought for him the previous Christmas, returning to Beaufort to spend the night with my sister Kathy's family. Each day I would cook Dad's lunch and introduce him to foods he'd never heard of and certainly would never have eaten. My father had the refined palate of a billy goat, but I could fix him hamburgers with foie gras and veal stews from Italy. I once fed him a meal of escargot and told him they were cut from lamb steaks. I even made up a recipe for him and called it The Great Santini Oyster Casserole. He hated oysters but would eat any dish named after his favorite person.

On Christmas morning, my family and I and my new



THE GREAT SANTINI

On Christmas Day, "Dad transformed into the kind of father I used to dream about..."

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wife, Cassandra King, made a kingly feast for my father. Though badly weakened by cancer that would kill him, Dad proved to be a fighter pilot to the very last. When we gathered by the tree, Dad took his rightful place in an armchair and moaned that he couldn't begin to call out names until he had a cup of coffee. Carol ran to him with a steaming cup. It seemed like an hour before he finished it. He

reached down for a present, pretended to have trouble reading the card, then said, "To Carol, from Santa Claus."

His quavering voice was weak, but its memory ran past thirty Christmases to that irretrievable time when our father seemed prince-like and generous with his love of us.

The Great Santini at Christmas—the best of times, the best of times, our best days as a family on earth. ♦

The Great Santini Oyster Casserole

When I was teaching on Daufuskie Island in 1969, I would begin to pass the black oystermen who worked the mud flats as I left the inland waterway for the boat ramp in Bluffton. On three different occasions, they would flag me down as I passed them and I would tow their bateaux into the Bluffton oyster factory. They were weathered, hardworking men, and they would often press on me a couple buckets of freshly picked oysters for my services. If there is anything better than a raw oyster in the known world, it has to be hidden in the egg sac of a beluga sturgeon.

One of the grand distinctions of life in the Lowcountry of South Carolina is that the oystermen and crabbers and shrimpers are still plying the waters in search of their catch. All are endangered species now, both the men who hunt them and the animals they seek. But I can look out my window onto Battery Creek and know that there are still productive and yielding oyster banks a mile from my home. —Pat Conroy

SERVES 12, or 4 Marine Fighter Pilots

3/4 cup butter, divided *

A good-sized onion (South Carolina-sized, not Texas-sized), chopped

1 red bell pepper, chopped

1 3/4 pounds of wild mushrooms, sliced (such as tree oyster, hedgehog, chanterelle, shiitake)

4 tablespoons of chopped chives

Salt and pepper to taste

1/2 cup of all-purpose flour

1 1/2 cups heavy cream (lose weight after Christmas)

32 fresh Beaufort County oysters

Reserved oyster liquor to make a full cup of liquid

1/2 cup of grated Parmigiano (from a real wheel of cheese from Parma)

1/3 cup of Sauvignon Blanc

2 tablespoons melted butter

1 1/2 cups fine, dry breadcrumbs made from day-old good French or Italian loaf

1. Preheat broiler to 500° F. In a big skillet, melt four tablespoons of the butter. Add onion and bell pepper, and cook until they get that soft, giving-up look, about 5 to 6 minutes on medium-high. Add mushrooms and chives, season with salt and pepper, and cook approximately 9 minutes until golden brown and most of liquid has cooked out.

2. In a Dutch oven, melt remaining 1/2 cup butter. On low heat, whisk in flour, and cook for a minute. Pretend you were born in Louisiana when you do this. Then slowly, as in "Whoa, hoss," whisk in the cream and oyster liquor. Simmer, stirring often. Don't text. Don't e-mail. Keep stirring for 5 minutes until this stuff is smooth and thick. Take a deep breath. Notice what you're up to. You're going to like yourself a lot. Add two tablespoons of the cheese. Dump in all the wine, and season again with salt and pepper. Cook two minutes more, whisking constantly. Fold in oysters, and cook 3 more minutes. Fold in mushroom mixture.

3. Pour into deep lightly buttered pan or a medium-size casserole dish (13-inch x 9-inch). Combine remaining cheese and melted butter with enough breadcrumbs to cover, and sprinkle over the casserole. Bake 8 to 10 minutes or until bubbly and lightly browned.

Live easy and die hard.

* When perusing my shoddy notes for The Great Santini Oyster Casserole, I included the first version that I made with butter, fabulous butter. Then I remembered I substituted four or five slabs of bacon, which I crumbled into the beautiful pond of ingredients and made a jazzed-up gravy that my father loved. I think bacon could make even toe cheese good, but that's just me.

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Southern Living
tastemaker **Marian
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HAM-AND-CHEESE BUTTERMILK STRATA

MAKES 8 SERVINGS HANDS-ON: 30 MIN.
TOTAL TIME: 1 HR., PLUS 8 HOURS CHILLING

- 8 Nature's Own Honey Wheat® bread slices, cut into fourths
- 1 cup finely chopped Smithfield Hickory Smoked Spiral Ham®
- 1 (8-oz.) package shredded six-cheese Italian blend, divided
- 6 large eggs
- / cup whole milk
- / cup buttermilk
- 2 tsp. Dijon mustard
- / tsp. kosher salt
- / tsp. freshly ground pepper
- 2 Tbsp. sliced fresh chives

Arrange bread in a spoke pattern, overlapping edges, in a lightly greased 10-inch round quiche dish (or baking dish), tucking ham and 1/4 cups cheese between bread slices as you layer. Beat together eggs and next 5 ingredients. Slowly pour over bread. Sprinkle with remaining 1/4 cup cheese. Cover and chill overnight.

Preheat oven to 375°. Let strata stand at room temperature 30 minutes. Bake 30 minutes or until golden brown. Sprinkle with chives before serving.



BRUNCH

RANCH HOLLANDAISE DIP

MAKES 8 SERVINGS HANDS-ON: 15 MIN.
TOTAL TIME: 15 MIN.

- / cup unsalted butter
- 4 large pasteurized egg yolks
- 1/4 Tbsp. fresh lemon juice
- 5 tsp. Hidden Valley® Original Ranch Salad Dressing & Seasoning Mix
- / tsp. ground red pepper
- Blanched asparagus and red bell pepper wedges

Melt butter in a saucepan over medium heat; reduce heat to low, and keep warm. Process egg yolks, next 3 ingredients, and 1/4 Tbsp. water in a blender or food processor 2 to 3 minutes or until pale and fluffy. With blender running, add melted butter in a slow stream, processing until smooth. Serve warm with vegetables.

PIMENTO PICKLED SHRIMP

MAKES 8 SERVINGS HANDS-ON: 20 MIN.
TOTAL TIME: 20 MIN., PLUS 1 DAY CHILLING

- 2 lb. unpeeled, large raw shrimp (16/20 count)
- 2 (4-oz.) jars Dromedary® Diced Pimientos, drained
- / medium-size red onion, thinly sliced
- / cup olive oil
- / cup red wine vinegar
- 1 lemon, thinly sliced
- 2 Tbsp. drained capers
- 1 tsp. sugar
- 1 tsp. kosher salt
- / tsp. celery seed
- / tsp. dried crushed red pepper
- / cup chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley

Peel shrimp, and devein. Cook in boiling water to cover 3 minutes or just until shrimp turn pink; drain. Rinse with cold water.

Stir together pimientos and next 9 ingredients in a bowl; fold in shrimp. Chill 24 hours, stirring occasionally. Stir in parsley before serving.

WINTER CITRUS SALAD

MAKES 8 SERVINGS HANDS-ON: 25 MIN.
TOTAL TIME: 2 HR., 25 MIN.

- / cup hot water
- / cup torn fresh mint
- 3 to 4 packets Equal® 0 Calorie Sweetener
- 6 large navel oranges
- 4 pink grapefruit
- 3 kiwis, peeled and sliced
- / cup pomegranate seeds
- Garnish: fresh mint leaves

Stir together first 3 ingredients in a bowl. With a small, sharp knife, cut ends off oranges. Place 1 orange, cut side down, on a cutting board; cut off peel and white pith. Holding orange over bowl with water mixture, cut between membranes, and remove whole segments.

Squeeze juice from orange membranes into bowl; discard membranes. Repeat procedure with remaining oranges and grapefruits, slicing into rounds. Stir grapefruit and orange segments into bowl, and chill 2 to 8 hours.

Fold in kiwi and sprinkle with pomegranate seeds just before serving.



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DESSERT

OREO COOKIE BALLS

MAKES 48 SERVINGS HANDS-ON: 20 MIN.
TOTAL TIME: 1 HR.

- 36 crushed OREO® Cookies
- 8 oz. softened cream cheese
- 12 oz. melted white chocolate or semi-sweet chocolate

Mix cookie crumbs and cream cheese until blended.

Roll into 48 balls; refrigerate 20 min.

Dip into melted chocolate, turning until evenly coated. Refrigerate until firm. Keep refrigerated.

Decorating Ideas: Use opposite chocolate variety to decorate as shown in photo.

BROWN SUGAR-CHOCOLATE BUNDT CAKE

MAKES 8 SERVINGS HANDS-ON: 25 MIN.
TOTAL TIME: 2 HR., 30 MIN.

- 1/4 cup chopped pecans
- 1/4 cup butter, softened
- 2 Tbsp. granulated sugar
- 2/3 cups all-purpose flour

- 1 tsp. baking soda
- 1 tsp. salt
- 1 cup butter, softened
- 1 cup firmly packed dark brown sugar
- 1/4 cup granulated sugar
- 1 Tbsp. vanilla extract
- 4 large eggs
- 1 cup buttermilk
- 3 (4-oz.) BAKER'S Semi-Sweet Chocolate®, finely chopped

Preheat oven to 350°. Stir together first 3 ingredients in a bowl, using a fork. Sprinkle into a greased and floured 12-cup Bundt pan.

Whisk together flour, baking soda, and salt.

Beat butter, brown sugar, 1/4 cup granulated sugar, and vanilla at medium speed with a heavy-duty electric stand mixer 3 to 5 minutes or until fluffy. Add eggs, 1 at a time, beating just until blended. Add flour mixture alternately with buttermilk, beginning and ending with flour mixture. Beat at low speed just until blended after each addition, stopping to scrape bowl as needed. Fold in chocolate. Spoon into prepared pan.

Bake at 350° for 50 to 55 minutes or until a long wooden pick inserted in center comes out clean. Cool in pan on a wire rack 15 minutes; remove from pan to wire rack, and cool completely (about 1 hour).

MEXICAN "HOT" CHOCOLATE MOUSSE

MAKES 8 SERVINGS HANDS-ON: 15 MIN.
TOTAL TIME: 2 HR., 15 MIN.

- 2 (3.9-oz.) boxes JELL-O Chocolate Instant Pudding®
- 2/3 cups cold whole milk
- 1/4 cup sour cream
- 2 tsp. instant espresso powder
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract
- 1/2 tsp. ground cinnamon
- Pinch of ground red pepper
- 1 (8-oz.) container COOL WHIP Whipped Topping®, thawed and divided

Garnishes: chocolate shavings, ground cinnamon or sticks

Beat first 7 ingredients with an electric mixer 2 minutes or until smooth and thickened. Fold in half of whipped topping. Spoon into 8 dishes. Chill 2 hours. Top with remaining whipped topping.

more HOLIDAY HELPERS



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AND KEEP A COMFORTING CASSEROLE OR STEW WARM ALL
EVENING TO SATISFY EARLY BIRDS AND SANTA TOO**

**SLOW-COOKER
SUNDAY SAUCE**

Recipe, page 176



RECIPES BY HUNTER LEWIS, ROBBY MELVIN, AND VANESSA MCNEIL ROCCHIO • PHOTOGRAPHY BY ALISON MIKSCH

PROP STYLING BY BUFFY HARGETT MILLER • FOOD STYLING BY ERIN JEANNE McDOWELL

**BLACK-EYED
PEA, COLLARD,
AND SWEET
POTATO STEW**

Recipe, page 176





**SPINACH
LASAGNA**

Recipe, page 176

**CHICKEN
ENCHILADAS**

Recipe, page 172



FAUX CASSOULET

This Southern version of the French classic comes together in a fraction of the time required to make the original because we use humble chicken thighs and country-style pork ribs. For easy sides, grab a loaf of crusty bread, and toss a tangy vinaigrette with fresh pear slices, toasted pecans, escarole, and frisée or a mix of your favorite winter greens.

- 6 skin-on, bone-in chicken thighs
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 1/4 cup olive oil
- 1 lb. boneless country-style pork ribs, cut into 1 1/2-inch pieces
- 12 oz. thick bacon, chopped
- 1 small onion, chopped
- 2 medium carrots, chopped
- 2 celery ribs, chopped
- 1 (28-oz.) can whole tomatoes, drained and chopped
- 3 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 (16-oz.) package smoked sausage, sliced
- 2 (15.8-oz.) cans great Northern beans, drained and rinsed
- 3/4 cup reduced-sodium chicken broth
- 2 Tbsp. chopped parsley
- 2 tsp. chopped thyme
- 2 tsp. chopped oregano
- 2 tsp. chopped rosemary
- 2 Tbsp. butter, melted
- 1 1/2 cups panko (Japanese breadcrumbs)

1. Sprinkle chicken with salt and pepper; cook half of chicken in 1 Tbsp. hot oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat 5 minutes on each side. Remove from skillet; repeat with 1 Tbsp. oil and remaining chicken. Wipe skillet clean. Sprinkle pork with salt and pepper, and sauté in remaining 2 Tbsp. hot olive oil in skillet, 3 minutes or until browned. Remove pork; wipe skillet clean.
2. Preheat oven to 300°. Cook bacon in skillet over medium heat, stirring occasionally, 8 minutes

FAUX CASSOULET



or until crisp; drain bacon, reserving 2 Tbsp. drippings in skillet. Add onion, carrots, and celery, and cook over medium heat, stirring occasionally, 8 minutes. Stir in chopped tomatoes, and cook 1 minute. Add garlic, and cook 1 minute.

3. Add bacon, sausage, and reserved pork to tomato mixture; bring to a simmer. Stir in beans and next 5 ingredients. Season with salt and pepper. Arrange chicken in a single layer, skin side up, in a large baking dish. Spoon bean mixture over chicken.
4. Stir together melted butter and breadcrumbs, and sprinkle over cassoulet. Bake at 300° for 2 1/2 to 3 hours or until golden brown and bubbly. Let stand 10 minutes before serving.

MAKES 6 to 8 servings. **HANDS-ON** 1 hour, 20 min.; **TOTAL** 4 hours

- 12 (6-inch) corn tortillas
- 4 cups shredded deli-roasted chicken
- 1/2 (8-oz.) block sharp Cheddar cheese, shredded
- 2 avocados, chopped
- 1/2 cup torn cilantro leaves
- 2 Tbsp. fresh lime juice

1. Prepare Sauce: Preheat broiler with oven rack 5 inches from heat. Broil first 5 ingredients on a foil-lined baking sheet, 6 minutes or until peppers blister and char. Remove from oven; let stand 10 minutes or until cool enough to handle. Peel and seed peppers; peel garlic. Reduce oven temperature to 375°.

2. Bring tomato sauce, next 5 ingredients, broiled vegetables, and 1 tsp. salt to a boil in a large saucepan over high heat, stirring occasionally. Reduce heat to medium-low; cook, stirring occasionally, 35 minutes. Remove from heat; cool 10 minutes. Process with a handheld blender or in batches in a food processor or blender until smooth.

3. Prepare Enchiladas: Shred 2 oz. Monterey Jack cheese to yield 1/2 cup. Cut remaining Monterey Jack cheese into 12 (4- x 1 1/2-inch) sticks.

4. Spread 1 cup enchilada sauce in a 13- x 9-inch baking dish coated lightly with cooking spray. Spread a thin layer of sauce on 1 tortilla. Place 1/3 cup chicken and 1 Monterey Jack cheese stick on edge of tortilla, and roll tortilla. Place in baking dish, seam side down. Repeat with remaining tortillas, chicken, and cheese sticks. Pour 2 1/2 cups sauce over tortillas. Chill remaining sauce for another use. Bake enchiladas at 375° for 30 minutes.

5. Top enchiladas with shredded Cheddar and shredded Monterey Jack cheese; bake 5 more minutes or until cheese is melted. Remove from oven; let stand 10 minutes.

6. Meanwhile, combine avocado, next 2 ingredients, and remaining 1/2 tsp. salt; serve with enchiladas.

MAKES 6 to 8 servings. **HANDS-ON** 45 min.; **TOTAL** 1 hour, 15 min.

CHICKEN ENCHILADAS

Make the enchilada sauce up to three days ahead; the flavors will meld and only get better.

SAUCE

- 4 Anaheim chiles or 3 large jalapeño peppers
- 3 poblano peppers
- 6 plum tomatoes, halved
- 1 onion, cut into wedges
- 7 garlic cloves, unpeeled
- 1 (28-oz.) can tomato sauce
- 2 cups chicken broth
- 1 Tbsp. ground chipotle chile pepper
- 1 Tbsp. chili powder
- 1 tsp. ground cumin
- 1 tsp. dried oregano
- 1 1/2 tsp. kosher salt, divided

ENCHILADAS

- 1 (8-oz.) block Monterey Jack cheese



“Without Green Bean Casserole, a holiday is just a day.”

The Wisest Kid in the Whole World™



GREEN BEAN CASSEROLE

PREP: 10 MIN. BAKE: 30 MIN. MAKES: 12 SERVINGS

What You'll Need

2 cans (10 $\frac{3}{4}$ oz. each) Campbell's® Condensed Cream of Mushroom Soup (Regular, 98% Fat Free or Healthy Request®)
1 cup milk
2 teaspoons soy sauce
1/4 teaspoon ground black pepper
8 cups cooked cut green beans
2 $\frac{2}{3}$ cups French's® French Fried Onions

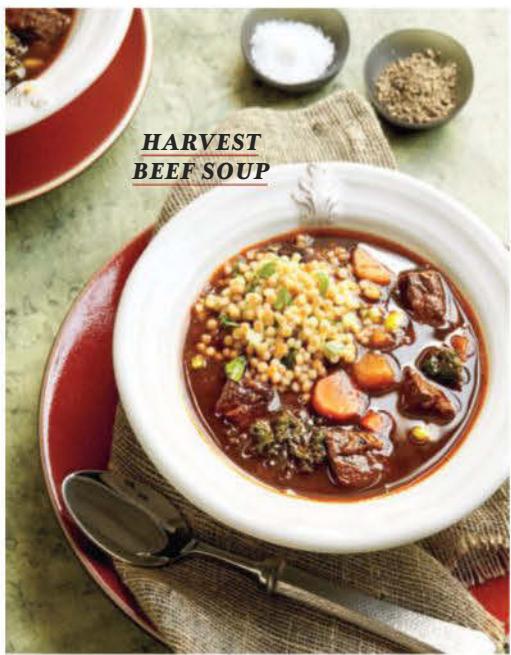
How to Make It

1. Stir the soup, milk, soy sauce, black pepper, beans and 1 $\frac{1}{3}$ cups onions in a 3-qt. casserole.
2. Bake at 350°F. for 25 minutes or until the bean mixture is hot and bubbling. Stir the bean mixture. Sprinkle with the remaining onions.
3. Bake for 5 minutes or until the onions are golden brown.

CampbellsKitchen.com

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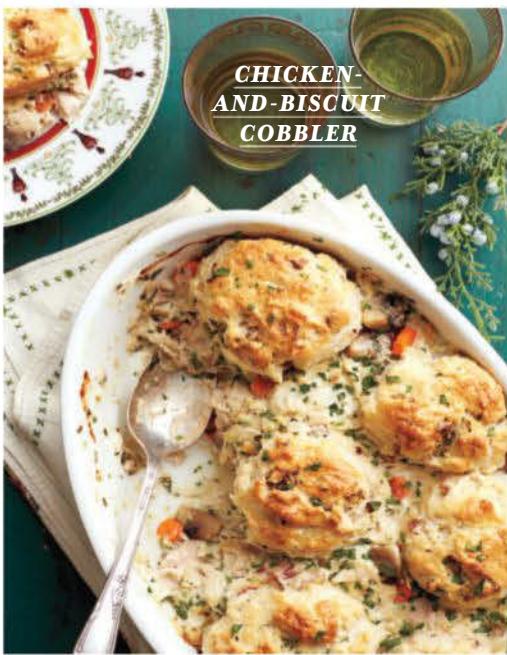
HARVEST BEEF SOUP

HARVEST BEEF SOUP

Edamame and kale are colorful and unexpected additions to this comforting soup. Feed a crowd, or freeze some for later.

- 5 thick bacon slices
- 1 onion, halved and sliced
- 8 oz. baby portobello mushrooms, quartered
- 3 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 tsp. kosher salt
- 1 tsp. ground black pepper
- 3 lb. top round steak, trimmed and cubed
- 2 Tbsp. olive oil
- 3 Tbsp. tomato paste
- 1 cup red wine
- 3 (1-oz.) containers concentrated beef stock (from a 4.66-oz. package)
- 1 lb. carrots, peeled and sliced
- 1 lb. parsnips, peeled and sliced
- 1 lb. butternut squash, cubed
- 4 fresh thyme sprigs
- 4 fresh oregano sprigs
- 1 (10-oz.) package refrigerated shelled edamame
- 4 cups baby kale
- 1 to 2 Tbsp. balsamic vinegar
- Parsley Couscous

1. Cook bacon in a large Dutch oven over medium heat 5 minutes or until crisp. Remove bacon, reserving $\frac{1}{4}$ cup drippings in Dutch oven. (Reserve bacon for another use.) Cook onion in hot drippings over medium-high heat, stirring occasionally, 4 minutes. Add mushrooms, and cook, stirring often, 5 minutes. Add garlic, and cook, stirring often, 1 minute. Remove mixture from Dutch oven, using a slotted spoon.
2. Sprinkle salt and pepper over beef. Cook beef in hot olive oil in a separate skillet, in 3 batches, over medium-high heat, stirring often, 5 minutes or until browned. Transfer beef to a bowl. Add tomato paste to Dutch oven, and cook, stirring often, 2 minutes. Stir in wine, and cook, stirring often, 4 minutes. Stir in concentrated beef stock, beef, and 8 cups water; bring to a boil. Cover and reduce heat to low. Cook, stirring occasionally, 1 hour.
3. Add carrots, next 4 ingredients, and onion mixture to Dutch oven. Cover and cook over low heat, stirring occasionally, 1 hour.
4. Add edamame and kale to Dutch oven, and cook, stirring



CHICKEN-AND-BISCUIT COBBLER

MAKES 4 $\frac{1}{2}$ qt. **HANDS-ON** 1 hour, 20 min.; **TOTAL** 3 hours, 30 min., including couscous

Parsley Couscous

Cook 1 cup **Israeli couscous** according to package directions. Stir in $\frac{1}{2}$ cup chopped fresh flat-leaf **parsley**.

MAKES 1 $\frac{1}{4}$ cups. **HANDS-ON** 10 min., **TOTAL** 10 min.

CHICKEN-AND-BISCUIT COBBLER

This family-friendly dish is sure to become a new holiday staple. Use fresh herbs in the cobbler.

- 3 Tbsp. butter
- 1 cup sliced carrots
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 2 (8-oz.) packages fresh mushrooms, quartered
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1/2 cup dry white wine
- 1/3 cup all-purpose flour
- 3 cups reduced-sodium chicken broth
- 3/4 cup whipping cream
- 1 Tbsp. white wine vinegar

- 3 Tbsp. sliced chives
- 3 Tbsp. chopped parsley
- 2 tsp. chopped rosemary
- 2 tsp. chopped thyme leaves
- 8 cups shredded cooked chicken
- Kosher salt
- Freshly ground black pepper
- 2 1/2 cups self-rising flour
- 1/2 tsp. sugar
- 1 1/4 cups chilled buttermilk
- 1/2 cup butter, melted
- 1/2 cup chopped cooked bacon (about 5 thick bacon slices)
- Garnishes: chopped fresh chives and parsley

1. Preheat oven to 400°. Melt 3 Tbsp. butter in a Dutch oven over medium-high heat. Add carrots and onion, and sauté 5 minutes. Add mushrooms; sauté 5

minutes or until tender. Stir in garlic; sauté 2 minutes. Add wine; cook 2 minutes. Sprinkle with $\frac{1}{3}$ cup all-purpose flour, and cook, stirring constantly, 3 minutes. Slowly add broth, stirring constantly; bring mixture to a boil, stirring constantly, 2 minutes or until thickened. Stir in cream and next 5 ingredients. Stir in chicken, and season to taste with salt and pepper. Cover and remove from heat.

2. Whisk together 2 1/2 cups self-rising flour and 1/2 tsp. sugar in a medium bowl. Stir together buttermilk and 1/2 cup melted butter in a small bowl. Stir buttermilk mixture and bacon into flour mixture until dough pulls away from sides of bowl.

3. Return chicken mixture to medium-high heat; cook, stirring constantly, 2 minutes or until bubbly and hot. Spoon mixture into buttered 3-qt. ceramic or glass baking dish. Drop biscuit dough by level 1/4 cupfuls, 1/2 inch apart, onto chicken mixture.

4. Bake at 400° for 30 to 35 minutes or until browned and bubbly.

MAKES 8 servings. **HANDS-ON** 1 hour, 15 min.; **TOTAL** 1 hour, 45 min.

Hey kids, it's
VEGGIES!



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The way Ranch is supposed to taste.™



SLOW-COOKER SUNDAY SAUCE

Canned whole peeled tomatoes work best in this delicious sauce. Use a pair of kitchen shears to coarsely cut them in the can, or squeeze them by hand.

3 lb. boneless pork shoulder, cut into 2-inch cubes
1 1/2 tsp. kosher salt
1 tsp. ground black pepper
3 Tbsp. olive oil, divided
1 lb. sweet Italian sausage, casings removed, chopped
4 oz. pancetta, chopped
2 3/4 cup chopped yellow onion
1 cup chopped carrots
8 garlic cloves, chopped
1 cup red wine
1 (28-oz.) can whole peeled tomatoes, chopped
1 (28-oz.) can tomato puree
3 fresh thyme sprigs
2 fresh oregano sprigs
1 fresh rosemary sprig
1/2 cup reduced-sodium chicken broth
Hot cooked pasta

1. Stir together first 3 ingredients; sauté, in batches, in 2 Tbsp. hot oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat 10 minutes. Transfer to an 8-qt. slow cooker.
2. Sauté sausage in remaining 1 Tbsp. hot oil in skillet 6 minutes or until no longer pink. Transfer to slow cooker, reserving drippings in skillet.
3. Sauté pancetta in hot drippings in skillet over medium heat 7 minutes or until crisp. Add onion, carrots, and garlic; sauté 5 minutes or until tender. Increase heat to high; add wine. Bring to a boil, stirring to loosen browned bits. Cook, stirring constantly, 5 minutes or until reduced by half.
4. Add tomatoes and tomato puree; bring to a boil. Transfer to slow cooker; add thyme and next 3 ingredients. Cover; cook on HIGH 1 hour. Reduce to LOW; cook 7 hours. Discard herbs; serve sauce over hot cooked pasta.

MAKES 8 1/2 cups. **HANDS-ON** 1 hour, 10 min.; **TOTAL** 9 hours, 10 min.

BLACK-EYED PEA, COLLARD, AND SWEET POTATO STEW

Don't be intimidated by the length of the ingredient list for this thrifty Southern stew. The majority of the ingredients are used to make a fantastic stock that starts with a Southern classic: *potlikker*. Then we use loads of fresh, aromatic vegetables, herbs, and spices to round out the flavor. Serve the stew ladled over hot cooked rice, and sprinkle with the fresh herbs.

1 bunch fresh collard greens (1 lb.)
6 whole cloves
1 medium-size yellow onion, halved
2 Tbsp. vegetable oil
10 parsley stems
10 cilantro stems
4 fresh thyme sprigs
4 celery ribs, peeled and coarsely chopped
3 bay leaves
3 large carrots, peeled and coarsely chopped
1 garlic bulb, halved
2 (2-inch) pieces fresh ginger, peeled and crushed
1 (14.5-oz.) can diced tomatoes, drained
1 tsp. dried crushed red pepper
4 Tbsp. sugar
5 Tbsp. rice vinegar
4 Tbsp. soy sauce
2 smoked ham hocks
1 lb. chicken wings
1 lb. pork neck bones
1 (16-oz.) package dried black-eyed peas
2 medium-size sweet potatoes, peeled and cubed
2 tsp. kosher salt
Freshly ground black pepper
Hot sauce
6 cups hot cooked rice
1/4 cup coarsely chopped parsley leaves
1/4 cup coarsely chopped cilantro leaves

1. Remove and chop collard stems. Chop collard leaves. Insert 3 whole cloves in each onion half, and place onions, cut sides down, in hot oil in a Dutch oven over medium-high heat. Add parsley stems, next 9 ingredients, and collard stems. Cook, stirring gently, 10 minutes or until vegetables begin to soften. Add 4 qt. water, and whisk in sugar, rice vinegar, and soy sauce; cook 1 minute, stirring to blend. Add ham hocks, chicken wings, and pork necks. Bring to a boil, skimming off foam. Reduce heat to low; simmer 3 hours or until ham hocks are tender and *potlikker* is rich in flavor, skimming as necessary.

2. Meanwhile, rinse and sort peas. Bring peas and water to cover to a boil in a large saucepan over high heat. Cook 2 minutes, skimming off foam. Drain peas.
3. Pour *potlikker* through a fine wire-mesh strainer into an 8-cup glass measuring cup, reserving hocks, chicken wings, and pork neck bones; discard remaining solids. Remove and chop meat from ham hocks, chicken wings, and pork neck bones; discard bones and skin.

4. Wipe Dutch oven clean, and return *potlikker* to Dutch oven. Add drained peas, chopped ham, chicken, pork, and collard leaves to *potlikker*. Bring to a boil over high heat, reduce heat to medium-low, and simmer, stirring occasionally, 15 minutes or until peas are just tender. Stir in sweet potatoes, and cook, stirring occasionally, 10 minutes or until peas and sweet potatoes are tender. Stir in 2 tsp. kosher salt. Add freshly ground black pepper and hot sauce to taste. Adjust seasoning, if desired. Serve stew over hot cooked rice, and sprinkle with chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley and chopped fresh cilantro. Serve with hot sauce, if desired.

MAKES 1 1/2 qt. **HANDS-ON** 1 hour, 30 min.; **TOTAL** 4 hours, 20 min.

SPINACH LASAGNA

Always a crowd-pleaser, this lasagna is full of hearty veggies.

1 (24-oz.) jar pasta sauce
1/4 tsp. dried crushed red pepper
2 1/3 cups heavy cream, divided
32 oz. ricotta cheese
1 oz. fresh basil, chopped
1/2 tsp. kosher salt
2 cups freshly shredded Parmesan cheese, divided
4 large shallots, thinly sliced
1/3 cup olive oil
8 garlic cloves, minced
2 (10-oz.) packages fresh baby spinach
2 Tbsp. butter
1 Tbsp. all-purpose flour
12 no-boil lasagna noodles
1 (12-oz.) jar roasted red bell pepper strips, drained

1. Preheat oven to 350°. Combine first 2 ingredients and 1 cup cream. Separately combine ricotta, next 2 ingredients, and 1 cup Parmesan. Sauté shallots in hot oil in a Dutch oven over medium-high heat 3 minutes. Add garlic; sauté 1 minute. Remove shallot mixture.
2. Add one-third of spinach to Dutch oven; cook over medium-high heat 1 minute or until wilted. Place spinach in a colander; drain. Repeat with remaining spinach.
3. Cook butter and flour in Dutch oven over medium heat, stirring constantly, 1 minute. Add 1 1/3 cups cream; bring to a boil. Remove from heat; add spinach and shallots.
4. Pour 1/2 cup sauce mixture in a 13- x 9-inch baking dish coated with cooking spray; top with 3 lasagna noodles. Layer half of spinach mixture, half of roasted peppers, 3 lasagna noodles, and half of ricotta mixture over pasta. Repeat layers; top with 3 lasagna noodles. Pour remaining sauce mixture over top. Place baking dish on a foil-lined baking sheet.
5. Bake at 350° for 1 hour. Top with 1 cup Parmesan, and bake 15 minutes. Let stand 30 minutes.

MAKES 6 to 8 servings. **HANDS-ON** 50 min.; **TOTAL** 2 hours, 35 min. ☀



— ADD JIMMY DEAN® AND TURN —
GREAT STUFFING
INTO
GONE STUFFING



INGREDIENTS:

- 1 16-oz. pkg. Jimmy Dean® Premium Pork Sausage (Sage or Regular)
- 2 cups celery, chopped
- 1 cup onion, finely chopped
- 4 cups cornbread, toasted & chopped
- 1/4 cup fresh parsley, chopped
- 1 tsp. poultry seasoning
- 1 cup chicken broth
- 1 egg, lightly beaten
- 1/2 cup pecans, chopped (optional)

DIRECTIONS:

1. **PREHEAT** oven to 325°F. Cook sausage, celery and onion in large skillet over MEDIUM-HIGH heat 8-10 min. or until sausage is thoroughly cooked; drain. Spoon into large bowl.
2. **ADD** cornbread, parsley and seasoning; mix lightly. Add in broth, egg and mix until blended. Stir in pecans.
3. **SPOON** into lightly greased 2-quart casserole or soufflé dish; cover and bake 45 min. or until thoroughly heated, uncovering after 35 min.

PREP TIME: 20 min. **COOK TIME:** 45 min.

COOK'S TIP: To toast cornbread, bake at 400°F for 10 min.

TRY OUR SAUSAGE CORNBREAD STUFFING - IF ANYONE ASKS, WE WON'T MIND IF YOU CALL IT YOUR OWN.

I'LL BE HOME FOR

CHRISTMAS MORNING

WITH MAKE-AHEAD OPTIONS LIKE A CHOCOLATE BREAKFAST WREATH AND BACON-AND-CHEESE GRITS QUICHE, PRACTICALLY ALL THAT'S LEFT TO DO IS OPEN SOME GIFTS AND JINGLE THE BREAKFAST BELL

PHOTOGRAPHY BY ALISON MIKSCH

PROP STYLING BY HEATHER CHADDUCK HILLEGAS • FOOD STYLING BY MARIAN COOPER CAIRNS



**BANANAS FOSTER
COFFEE CAKE WITH
VANILLA-RUM SAUCE**

Recipe, page 185



CHOCOLATE
BREAKFAST WREATH

Recipe, page 180

CHOCOLATE BREAKFAST WREATH

Be sure to soften butter until it's spreadable. The silky dough is a dream to work with, so even beginning bakers can make this beautiful wreath. Try this chocolate version or Citrus-Cranberry.

1/2 cup warm milk (100°)
2 (1/4-oz.) envelopes active dry yeast
1/3 cup plus 1/2 cup sugar, divided
4 1/2 cups all-purpose flour, divided
2 tsp. kosher salt
1 1/2 cups soft butter, divided
3 large eggs, at room temperature
Parchment paper
1 (4-oz.) bittersweet chocolate baking bar, finely chopped
Easy Vanilla Glaze

1. Combine milk, yeast, and 1/3 cup sugar in bowl of a stand mixer; let stand 5 minutes or until foamy. Gradually add 1 cup flour, beating at low speed until blended; scrape down sides. Add salt and 1 cup butter; beat at low speed until smooth. Add eggs, 1 at a time, beating until incorporated after each addition and scraping sides of bowl as needed. Gradually add remaining 3 1/2 cups flour, beating until blended. Increase speed to medium, and beat until dough forms a ball and begins to pull away from sides. Beat dough 2 more minutes or until smooth and elastic. Turn dough out onto a lightly floured surface, and knead 3 minutes.

2. Place dough in a large greased bowl, turning to grease top. Cover with plastic wrap, and let rise in a warm place (80° to 85°), free from drafts, 1 hour or until doubled in

MAKE-AHEAD TIP

FRESHLY BAKED BREAD

Make the dough (through Step 4) a day ahead. Chill overnight. Let the dough come to room temperature and rise in the morning. Then bake and serve.

4. Transfer parchment paper with dough onto a baking sheet. Shape rolled dough into a ring, pressing ends together to seal. Cut ring at 2-inch intervals, from outer edge up to (but not through) inside edge. Gently pull and twist cut pieces to show filling. Cover dough.

5. Let rise in a warm place (80° to 85°), free from drafts, 1 hour or until doubled in bulk. Preheat oven to 350°. Uncover dough. Melt remaining 2 Tbsp. butter; brush over dough. Bake 30 to 40 minutes or until golden. Cool on pan 10 minutes. Drizzle Easy Vanilla Glaze over warm bread.

MAKES 10 to 12 servings. **HANDS-ON** 25 min.; **TOTAL** 3 hours, 40 min.

Easy Vanilla Glaze

Whisk together 2 cups **powdered sugar**, 3 Tbsp. **milk**, 1/2 tsp. **vanilla** extract, and a dash of **table salt**. Whisk in up to 1 Tbsp. milk, 1 tsp. at a time, until desired consistency is reached.

MAKES 1 1/2 cups. **HANDS-ON** 5 min., **TOTAL** 5 min.

Citrus-Cranberry Wreath: Omit chocolate and Easy Vanilla Glaze. Soak 1 cup sweetened **dried cranberries** in 1 cup boiling water 15 minutes; drain and pat cranberries dry. Prepare Breakfast Wreath recipe as directed through Step 3, sprinkling cranberries over dough and 1 Tbsp. lightly packed **orange zest** over cranberries before rolling. Proceed as directed in Steps 4 and 5. Beat together 3 oz. softened **cream cheese** and 1 Tbsp. softened **butter** in a medium bowl at medium speed with an electric mixer. Gradually add 2 cups **powdered sugar** to cream cheese mixture alternately with 2 Tbsp. fresh **orange juice**, beating at medium speed after each addition. Add up to 2 Tbsp. fresh orange juice, 1 tsp. at a time, until desired consistency is reached. Drizzle over bread.

HANDS-ON 25 min.; **TOTAL** 3 hours, 40 min.

HOW-TO

Shape the Wreath

THIS LUSCIOUS BUTTERY BREAD HAS A GORGEOUS LIGHT-AS-AIR TEXTURE. AND IT'S AS EASY TO ASSEMBLE AS ONE, TWO, THREE!



STEP 1: ROLL

After sprinkling the sugar and chocolate over the buttered dough, roll it up tightly to form a cylinder, beginning with one of the long sides of dough. Use the parchment paper as a guide to roll, if necessary. Press to seal, and place, seam side down, on the parchment paper.

STEP 2: SHAPE

Transfer parchment paper and dough onto a baking sheet so that it rests horizontally in front of you. Dampen the ends of dough slightly with wet fingers, and bring the dampened ends together, pinching the seam to seal. Stretch and shape dough gently into a nice circle.

STEP 3: CUT

Using a sharp knife, slice the dough at 1 1/2- to 2-inch intervals without cutting all the way up to or through the inner portion of the ring. Turn each section of dough on its side, fanning in the same direction to expose the spiral of filling.

**CHEESY
SAUSAGE-AND-
CROISSANT
CASSEROLE**

Recipe, page 183



**CRANBERRY-
ORANGE
MUFFINS**

Recipe, page 185

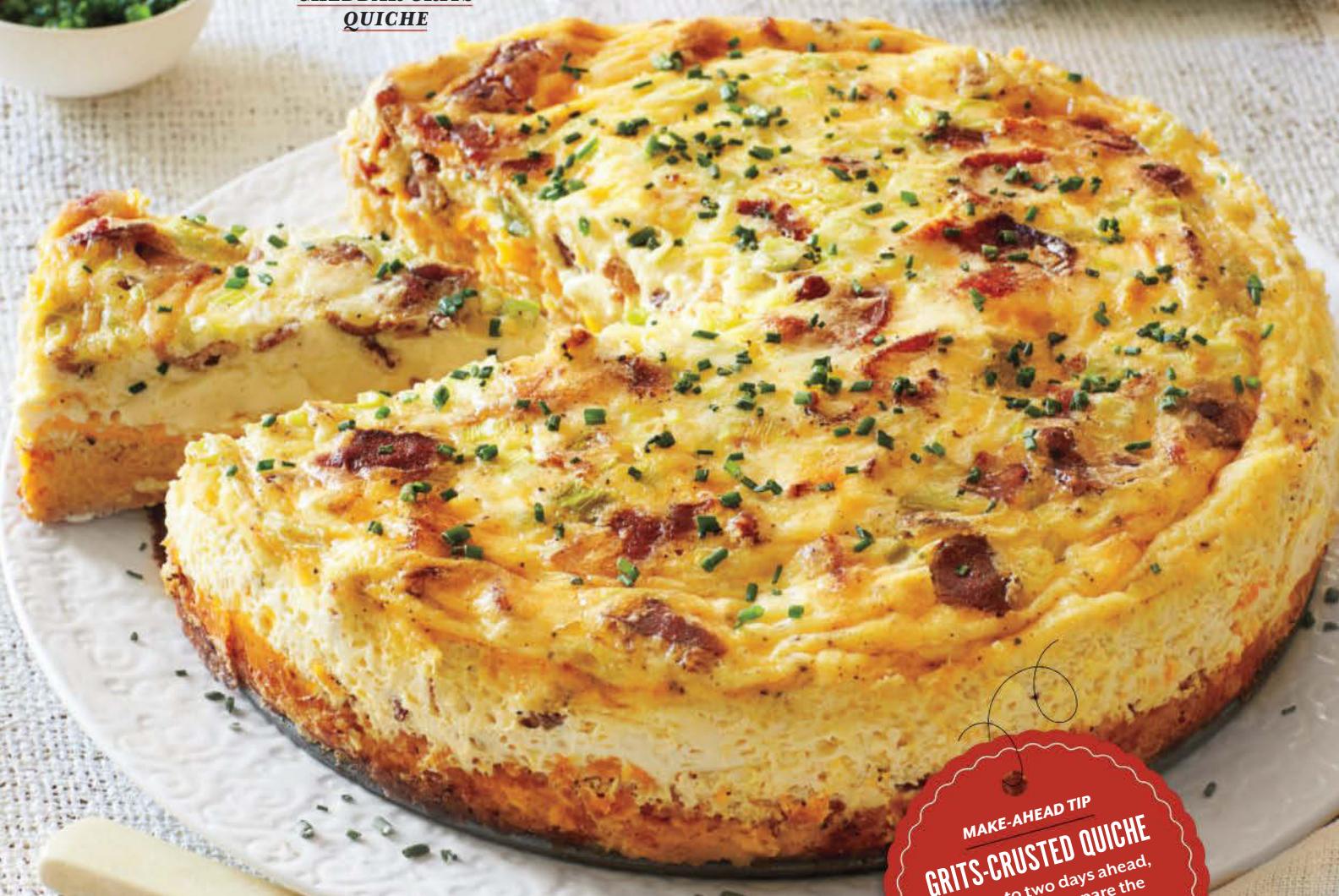


**CRANBERRY-
ORANGE
MUFFINS**

Recipe, page 185



BACON-AND-
CHEESE GRITS
QUICHE



MAKE-AHEAD TIP

GRITS-CRUSTED QUICHE

Bake up to two days ahead, and chill. Or prepare the recipe through Step 3; then top with custard and bake while you open gifts on Christmas morning.

BACON-AND-CHEDDAR GRITS QUICHE

Spread cheese to the edge of the warm, bacony grits "crust" to prevent any custard from seeping out while the quiche bakes.

6 thick bacon slices
2 1/4 cups milk
2 Tbsp. butter
1/2 cup uncooked stone-ground grits
2 tsp. kosher salt, divided
1 tsp. black pepper, divided
2 1/2 cups shredded sharp Cheddar cheese, divided
6 large eggs
2 1/2 cups half-and-half
1 cup heavy cream
1/3 cup sliced green onions

1. Preheat oven to 350°. Cook bacon in a skillet over medium heat until crisp. Remove bacon; drain and crumble. Transfer 2 tsp. bacon drippings to a saucepan.
2. Bring drippings, milk, and butter to a boil over medium heat. Gradually whisk in grits, 1 tsp. salt, and 1/2 tsp. pepper; cook, whisking constantly, 15 minutes or until very thick. Remove from heat; let stand 10 minutes. Stir in 1 cup cheese; let stand 10 minutes. Stir in 1 egg; spread in a 9-inch springform pan coated with cooking spray.
3. Bake at 350° for 25 minutes or until set and browned. Sprinkle remaining 1 1/2 cups cheese over warm grits, spreading to edges. Let stand 15 minutes.
4. Reduce oven temperature to 325°. Combine half-and-half, cream, onions, and remaining 5 eggs, 1 tsp. salt, and 1/2 tsp. pepper. Pour over grits; sprinkle with crumbled bacon. Place pan on a foil-lined baking sheet.
5. Bake at 325° for 1 hour and 15 minutes or until lightly browned and just set. Let stand 20 minutes. Run a sharp knife around edges of quiche; remove sides of pan.

MAKES 10 servings. **HANDS-ON** 1 hour, 5 min.; **TOTAL** 3 hours, 45 min.

AMBROSIA WITH CHANTILLY CREAM



AMBROSIA WITH CHANTILLY CREAM

The original ambrosia recipe is simply a layering of orange slices, sugar, and toasted unsweetened coconut. Over the years, folks began to add pineapple, maraschino cherries, and whipped cream to create more of a fruit salad, but the name stuck.

1 cup sugar
3/4 cup fresh mint, divided
3 navel oranges, peeled and sectioned
3 blood oranges, peeled and sectioned
2 grapefruit, peeled and sectioned
6 clementines, peeled and sectioned

1. Bring sugar and 1/2 cup water to a boil; stir until sugar dissolves.

MAKE-AHEAD TIP FRESH MINT SYRUP

Steep fresh mint in hot sugar syrup to make a delightful simple syrup up to a week before Christmas. Section the citrus, and toss it with syrup the day before.

Boil 5 minutes. Remove from heat; steep 1/2 cup mint 20 minutes. Strain syrup; discard solids. Cool syrup completely.

2. Toss together citrus sections and 1/4 cup syrup. Cover and chill 8 hours, stirring occasionally. (Reserve remaining syrup for another use.) Chop remaining 1/4 cup mint; toss with fruit. Serve with Chantilly Cream.

MAKES 8 to 10 servings. **HANDS-ON** 50 min.; **TOTAL** 9 hours, 10 min., including cream

Chantilly Cream

1 (8-oz.) container crème fraîche or sour cream
3/4 cup whipping cream
3/4 tsp. vanilla extract
3 Tbsp. powdered sugar

Beat crème fraîche in a large bowl at medium speed with an electric mixer 30 seconds. Add remaining ingredients; beat at high speed 3 minutes or until soft peaks form.

MAKES about 2 1/2 cups. **HANDS-ON** 5 min., **TOTAL** 5 min.

CHEESY SAUSAGE-AND-CROISSANT CASSEROLE

This casserole is rich, delicious, and worthy of Christmas breakfast. Gruyère cheese browns beautifully and adds a nutty flavor to the dish. You can sub Swiss cheese if you prefer.

1 lb. hot ground pork sausage (such as Jimmy Dean)
1 1/4 cups (5 oz.) shredded Parmesan cheese
1 tsp. table salt
6 green onions, sliced
1 (13.22-oz.) package mini croissants (about 24), torn
Vegetable cooking spray
3 cups milk
1 cup heavy cream
5 large eggs, lightly beaten
2 cups (8 oz.) shredded Gruyère cheese

1. Cook sausage 8 minutes in a skillet over medium-high heat, stirring to crumble. Toss together sausage, Parmesan, and next 3 ingredients; arrange in a 13- x 9-inch baking dish coated with cooking spray.
2. Whisk together milk and next 2 ingredients; pour over sausage mixture. Cover and chill 8 hours.
3. Preheat oven to 350°. Uncover casserole, and sprinkle with Gruyère. Bake 45 minutes or until golden. Let stand 10 minutes.

MAKES 8 to 10 servings. **HANDS-ON** 20 min.; **TOTAL** 1 hour, 15 min.

GLUTEN-FREE BUTTERMILK-PECAN- WALNUT CAKE

6 Tbsp. turbinado sugar, divided
4 cups pecan halves, toasted
3 cups walnut halves, toasted
1 1/2 cups slivered almonds, toasted
3/4 cup finely ground plain white cornmeal
1 cup butter, softened
3/4 cup firmly packed light brown sugar
6 large eggs
3/4 cup buttermilk
1/2 cup half-and-half
1 tsp. kosher salt
1 tsp. vanilla extract
Coffee Cream (page 185)

1. Preheat oven to 350°. Sprinkle 3 Tbsp. turbinado sugar in a well-greased (with butter) 12-inch cast-iron skillet. Process pecans, walnuts, and almonds in a food processor until coarsely chopped; reserve 2 cups coarsely chopped nuts. Add cornmeal to remaining nuts in processor; pulse until nuts are finely chopped.

2. Beat butter and brown sugar at medium speed with an electric mixer 2 to 3 minutes or until light and fluffy.

3. Whisk together eggs and next 4 ingredients in a medium bowl. Gradually add egg mixture to butter mixture, beating at low speed 2 minutes or until blended, stopping to scrape bowl as needed. Gradually add cornmeal mixture to batter, beating until well blended; fold in reserved 2 cups coarsely chopped nuts. Spoon batter into prepared skillet. Level batter using an offset spatula, and sprinkle remaining 3 Tbsp. turbinado sugar over batter.

4. Bake at 350° for 45 to 55 minutes or until a wooden pick inserted in center comes out clean. Cool completely on a wire rack. Serve with Coffee Cream.

MAKES 10 to 12 servings. **HANDS-ON** 45 min.; **TOTAL** 2 hours, 5 min., including Coffee Cream

MAKE-AHEAD TIP GLUTEN-FREE GOODNESS

This deliciously dense cake uses ground heart-healthy nuts and cornmeal for structure. It actually tastes better as it sits and can be made up to 4 days ahead. Just whip the cream and serve.

GLUTEN-FREE BUTTERMILK-PECAN- WALNUT CAKE



Coffee Cream

Stir together 1 cup **heavy cream** and $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. **instant dark roast coffee** or instant espresso in a medium bowl until well blended. Beat at high speed with an electric mixer 1 minute. Gradually add 6 Tbsp. **powdered sugar**, beating until soft peaks form.

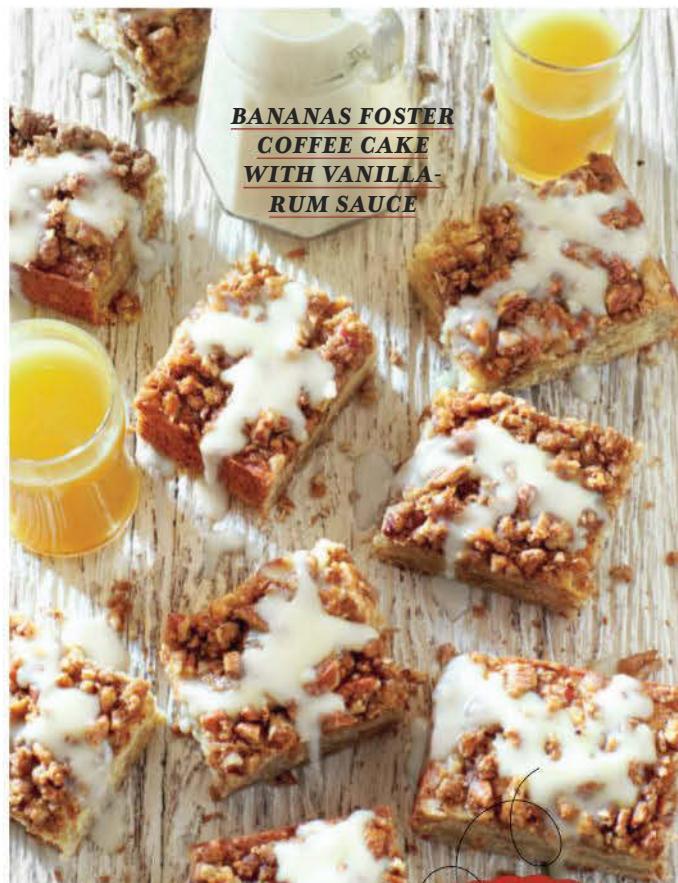
MAKES $2\frac{1}{2}$ cups. **HANDS-ON** 5 min., **TOTAL** 5 min.

CRANBERRY-ORANGE MUFFINS

Sprinkle the tops of the glazed muffins with coarse sugar to add texture and a little sparkle.

3/4 cup butter, softened
2 1/3 cups granulated sugar, divided
4 large eggs
2 Tbsp. orange zest
2 1/2 cups plus 1 Tbsp. all-purpose flour
1/2 cup plain yellow cornmeal
2 tsp. baking powder
1/2 tsp. table salt
1 cup milk
2 cups fresh cranberries, coarsely chopped
Vegetable cooking spray
4 1/2 tsp. fresh orange juice
4 1/2 tsp. fresh lemon juice
Turbinado sugar (optional)

1. Preheat oven to 350° . Beat butter with an electric mixer until creamy; gradually add 2 cups granulated sugar, beating until light and fluffy. Add eggs, 1 at a time, beating until blended after each addition. Beat in zest.
2. Stir together $2\frac{1}{2}$ cups flour and next 3 ingredients; add to butter mixture alternately with milk, beginning and ending with flour mixture. Toss cranberries with 1 Tbsp. flour. Fold cranberries into batter. Divide batter evenly between 2 (12-cup) muffin pans coated with cooking spray.
3. Bake at 350° for 25 minutes or until a wooden pick inserted in center comes out clean.
4. Meanwhile, bring orange juice,



BANANAS FOSTER COFFEE CAKE WITH VANILLA-RUM SAUCE

BANANAS FOSTER COFFEE CAKE WITH VANILLA-RUM SAUCE

Substitute extra cream for rum in the sauce, if you prefer.

1 1/2 cups mashed ripe bananas
7 Tbsp. light rum, divided
2 cups brown sugar, divided
1 1/2 cups soft butter, divided
2 tsp. vanilla extract, divided
8 oz. cream cheese, softened
2 large eggs
3 1/4 cups plus 3 Tbsp. all-purpose flour, divided
5/8 tsp. table salt, divided
1/2 tsp. baking powder
1/2 tsp. baking soda
1 1/2 cups chopped pecans
1 tsp. ground cinnamon
1 cup granulated sugar
2 cups heavy cream

1. Preheat oven to 350° . Cook bananas, 3 Tbsp. rum, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup brown sugar, and $\frac{1}{4}$ cup butter in a skillet until mixture is bubbly. Cool; stir in 1 tsp. vanilla.

2. Beat cream cheese and $\frac{1}{2}$ cup butter at medium speed with an electric mixer until creamy. Add 1 cup brown sugar; beat until fluffy. Beat in eggs 1 at a time.

3. Stir together 3 cups flour, $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. salt, and next 2 ingredients; add to cream cheese mixture. Beat at low speed to blend. Stir in banana mixture. Spoon into a greased and floured 13×9 -inch pan.

4. Combine pecans, cinnamon, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup brown sugar, and $\frac{1}{4}$ cup flour. Melt $\frac{1}{4}$ cup butter; stir into pecan mixture. Sprinkle over batter. Bake at 350° for 45 minutes or until a wooden pick inserted in center comes out clean. Cool in pan on a wire rack 10 minutes.

5. Combine granulated sugar, 3 Tbsp. flour, and $\frac{1}{8}$ tsp. salt in a saucepan over medium heat. Add cream and $\frac{1}{2}$ cup butter; bring to a boil. Boil, whisking constantly, 2 minutes or until slightly thickened. Remove from heat; stir in $\frac{1}{4}$ cup rum and 1 tsp. vanilla.

MAKES 8 to 10 servings. **HANDS-ON** 20 min.; **TOTAL** 1 hour, 45 min.

MAKE-AHEAD TIP
HEAT, SLICE, AND EAT.
Bake the coffee cake and make the sauce on Christmas Eve day. Cool both, and cover. Chill the sauce, and reheat just before serving.

Brown Sugar-Toasted Pecan Muffins

Muffins: Omit cranberries and 1 Tbsp. flour. Prepare recipe as directed, substituting **light brown sugar** for granulated sugar and adding 1 tsp. **vanilla extract** with **orange zest** at end of Step 1. Stir 2 cups **chopped, toasted pecans** into batter. Bake at 350° for 18 to 22 minutes.

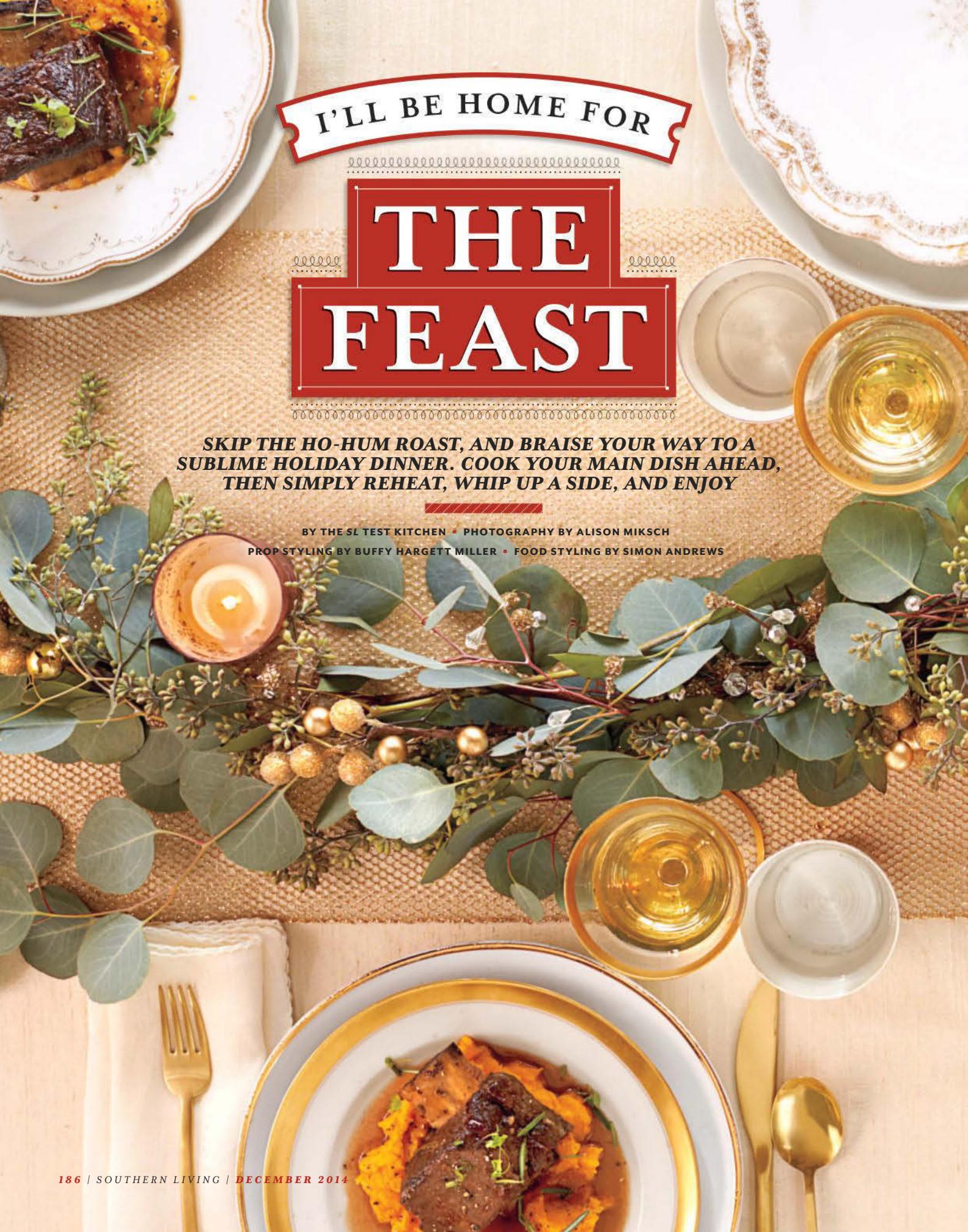
HANDS-ON 45 min.; **TOTAL** 1 hour, 10 min.

lemon juice, and remaining $\frac{1}{3}$ cup granulated sugar to a boil in a small saucepan over medium heat. Boil until sugar is completely dissolved and syrup has thickened slightly (about 1 minute).

5. Pierce top of each muffin several times with a wooden pick, and brush warm syrup mixture over muffins. Sprinkle tops of muffins with turbinado sugar, if desired. Cool in pans on wire racks 10 minutes.

MAKES 2 dozen. **HANDS-ON** 45 min.; **TOTAL** 2 hour, 15 min.

Blueberry-Lemon Muffins: Omit orange juice. Prepare recipe as directed, substituting **lemon zest** for orange zest and fresh whole **blueberries** or frozen blueberries for cranberries. (Do not chop blueberries.) Increase **lemon juice** to 3 Tbsp.



I'LL BE HOME FOR

THE FEAST

**SKIP THE HO-HUM ROAST, AND BRAISE YOUR WAY TO A
SUBLIME HOLIDAY DINNER. COOK YOUR MAIN DISH AHEAD,
THEN SIMPLY REHEAT, WHIP UP A SIDE, AND ENJOY**

BY THE SL TEST KITCHEN • PHOTOGRAPHY BY ALISON MIKSCH

PROP STYLING BY BUFFY HARGETT MILLER • FOOD STYLING BY SIMON ANDREWS



**BUTTERNUT
MASH**

Recipe, page 194



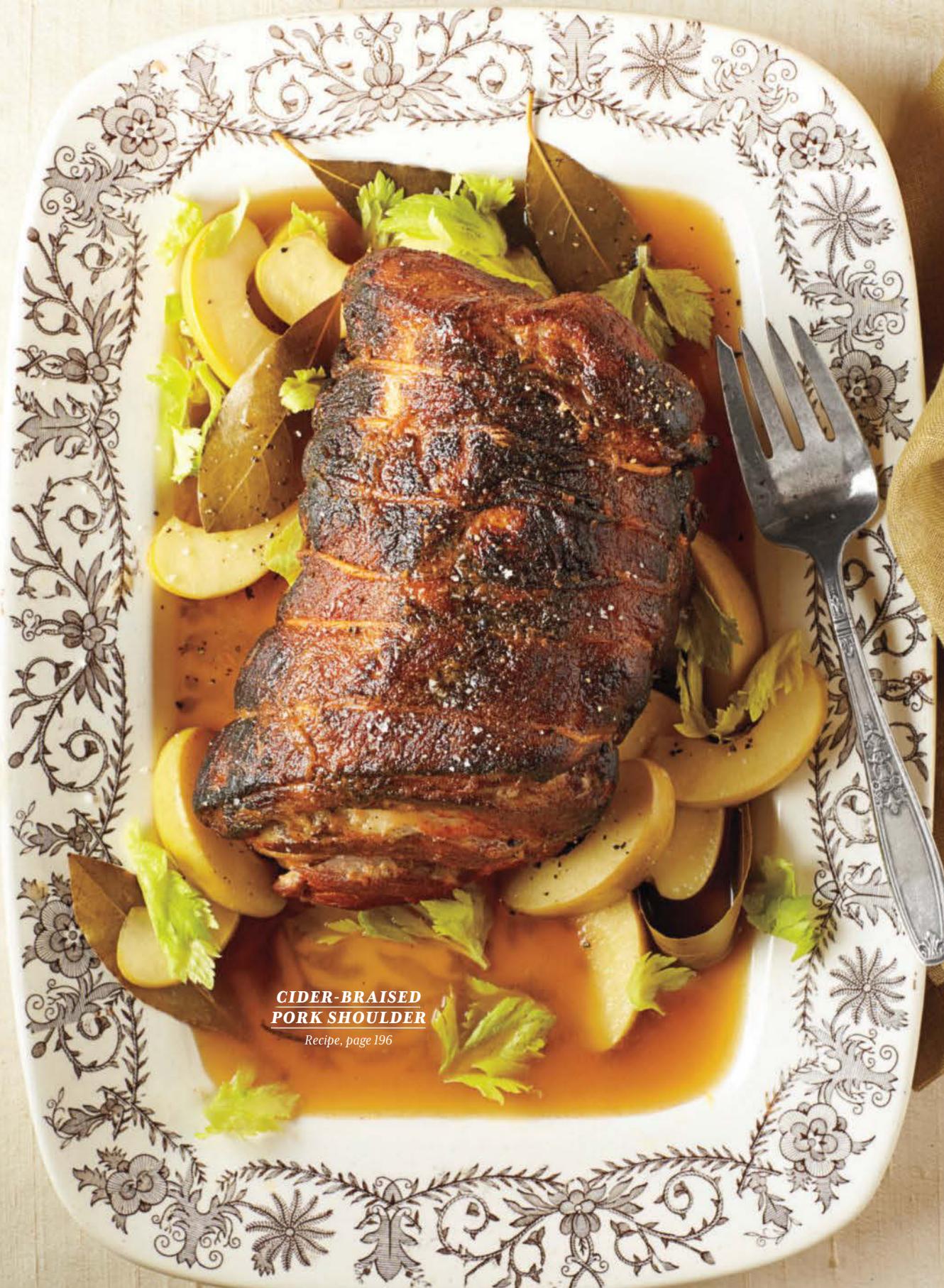
**BEEF
SHORT RIBS**

Recipe, page 196



COQ AU VIN

Recipe, page 196



**CIDER-BRAISED
PORK SHOULDER**

Recipe, page 196

PARMESAN-CRUSTED
LAMB SHANKS



PARMESAN-CRUSTED LAMB SHANKS

Parmigiano-Reggiano is aged, dry, and crumbly, so it's easy to grate, making it ideal for creating the beautiful and flavorful crust on these truly luscious shanks. If you want to work ahead, prepare the recipe through Step 3; cover and chill. Skim any solid fat off the top, reheat shanks and sauce, and pick back up with Step 4. This very flavorful and tender lamb pairs well with couscous or butternut puree (page 194).

6 lamb shanks
1/4 cup olive oil
2 Tbsp. tomato paste
1 cup red wine
1 (10 1/2-oz.) can beef consommé
6 flat-leaf parsley sprigs
4 fresh thyme sprigs
4 bay leaves
3 (1-inch) orange peel strips
2 celery ribs, cut into 1-inch pieces
1 large carrot, cut into 1-inch pieces
1 onion, cut into wedges
1 fresh rosemary sprig
4 Tbsp. butter, divided
1 1/2 cups panko (Japanese breadcrumbs)
1 cup finely grated fresh Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese
2 1/2 tsp. chopped fresh thyme
1 tsp. chopped rosemary
Garnishes: fresh thyme and rosemary

1. Preheat oven to 325°. Season lamb with salt and black pepper; let stand at room temperature 30 minutes. Cook 3 shanks in 2 Tbsp. hot oil in a large Dutch oven over medium-high heat 2 minutes on each side. Remove shanks, and repeat procedure with remaining shanks and oil, reserving drippings in Dutch oven.

2. Cook tomato paste in drippings about 30 seconds or until tomato paste chars slightly. Add wine; bring to a boil, stirring to loosen browned bits from pan. Boil



TANGY-SWEET LEMON CHICKEN

TANGY-SWEET LEMON CHICKEN

Mediterranean flavors meld deliciously in this chicken dish. Bone-in breasts are meaty and cook perfectly in the moist heat of the braise.

1 tsp. ground black pepper
2 tsp. kosher salt, divided
6 skin-on, bone-in chicken breasts
3 Tbsp. olive oil
1/4 cup sugar
3 lemons, halved
1 orange, quartered
1 cup pitted dates or prunes
3 garlic cloves, crushed
1 large onion, chopped
1 cinnamon stick
3/4 cup dry white wine
3 bay leaves
6 fresh thyme sprigs
1 cup unsalted chicken cooking stock
2 Tbsp. butter

1. Preheat oven to 325°. Sprinkle pepper and 1 1/2 tsp. salt evenly over chicken. Cook 3 chicken breasts, skin side down, in 1 1/2 Tbsp. hot oil in a large Dutch oven over medium heat 4 minutes or until skin is golden brown and crisp. Remove chicken from Dutch oven; wipe Dutch oven clean with paper towels. Repeat procedure with remaining 1 1/2 Tbsp. oil and 3 chicken breasts; reserve 2 Tbsp. drippings in Dutch oven.

2. Sprinkle sugar over cut sides of lemon halves and orange quarters. Cook fruit, cut sides down, in hot drippings in Dutch oven over medium-high heat about 5 minutes or until fruit browns and sugar melts and begins to bubble. Reduce heat to medium-low, and cook 3 more minutes. Add dates and next 3 ingredients; sauté 3 minutes.

3. Increase heat to high, and stir in wine. Bring mixture to a simmer, stirring to loosen browned bits from bottom of Dutch oven. Cook 3 to 5 minutes

3 minutes or until mixture is reduced to 1/3 cup. Stir in consommé, next 8 ingredients, and 1 cup water. Return shanks to Dutch oven. Place parchment paper directly on shanks; cover with a tight-fitting lid.

3. Bake at 325° for 3 hours or until meat is very tender and pulls away from bones. Let shanks stand, covered with parchment and lid, in Dutch oven at room temperature 30 minutes.

4. Melt 2 Tbsp. butter in a skillet over medium-high heat; add panko, and cook, stirring often, 1 minute or until lightly browned. Toss panko mixture with cheese, thyme, and rosemary. Place mixture in a shallow bowl.

5. Preheat broiler with oven rack 7 inches from heat. Discard parchment paper from lamb shanks. Remove shanks from

Dutch oven, reserving cooking liquid. Dredge each shank in panko mixture, pressing to adhere. Spray shanks lightly with cooking spray, and place on a lightly greased rack in a broiler pan. Broil 2 to 3 minutes on each side or until coating is golden and crisp. Transfer shanks to a platter; cover loosely to keep warm.

6. Skim fat from cooking liquid, and pour through a wire-mesh strainer into a large saucepan; discard solids. Bring to a simmer over medium-high heat. Simmer, whisking occasionally, 5 minutes or until sauce reduces slightly. Remove from heat. Add remaining 2 Tbsp. butter, and whisk until butter melts and sauce is smooth. Serve sauce with shanks.

MAKES 6 servings. **HANDS-ON** 1 hour, **TOTAL** 5 hours

or until almost all liquid has evaporated. Stir in bay leaves and next 2 ingredients. Nestle chicken in date mixture. Place a piece of parchment paper directly on chicken, and cover Dutch oven with a tight-fitting lid.

- Bake at 325° for 1 hour and 30 minutes or until chicken is tender. Let chicken stand, covered, in Dutch oven at room temperature 30 minutes. Discard parchment paper. Transfer chicken to a platter; cover to keep warm.
- Skim any fat from surface of cooking liquid. Pour cooking liquid through a fine wire-mesh strainer into a saucepan. Reserve lemons and oranges; discard remaining solids. Bring sauce to a simmer over medium-high heat. Remove from heat; add butter and whisk until sauce is smooth. Garnish chicken with reserved lemons and oranges, and serve with sauce.

Note: We tested with Swanson Unsalted Chicken Cooking Stock.

MAKES 6 servings. **HANDS-ON** 1 hour, **TOTAL** 3 hours

MAKE-AHEAD MAINS

Free up oven space on Christmas Day by braising your meat ahead

- Fully cook the meat per the recipe.
- Cool in the Dutch oven, lid off and covered with parchment, for 1 hour.
- Pop the Dutch oven, covered with lid, in fridge for up to two days.
- To serve, let the meat stand, covered and in the Dutch oven, at room temperature one hour.
- Reheat at 300° until hot; proceed with recipe.



BEER-BRAISED TURKEY LEGS

Recipe, page 198

4 ingredients, porcini mushrooms, and mushroom soaking liquid to Dutch oven. Cut 1 onion into wedges, and add to Dutch oven. Place a piece of parchment paper directly on brisket, and cover Dutch oven with a tight-fitting lid.

- Bake at 325° for 4 hours or until brisket is fork-tender. Let stand, covered with parchment and lid, in Dutch oven at room temperature for 30 minutes. Discard parchment paper.

5. Meanwhile, thinly slice remaining 2 onions. Melt 2 Tbsp. butter in a large skillet over medium heat. Add onion slices, and cook, stirring occasionally, 15 minutes or until golden and tender. Remove from skillet.

6. Increase heat to medium-high; melt 2 Tbsp. butter in skillet. Add cremini mushrooms, and sauté 8 minutes or until browned and tender. Remove cremini mushrooms from skillet; add to onion mixture.

7. Remove brisket to a cutting board, and slice across the grain. Transfer slices to a serving platter, and cover loosely to keep warm. Pour cooking liquid through a fine wire-mesh strainer into a medium saucepan; discard solids. Bring liquid to a boil over medium-high heat. Stir in onion-mushroom mixture, and cook, stirring occasionally, 5 minutes.

8. Melt remaining 2 Tbsp. butter in a small saucepan over medium-high heat; add cornstarch, and whisk until smooth. Cook mixture, whisking constantly, 30 seconds. Add cornstarch mixture to gravy; whisk to combine. Bring gravy to a boil, whisking occasionally. Cook gravy, whisking constantly, 1 minute. Remove from heat; season to taste with kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper. Serve gravy over brisket.

Note: We tested with Swanson 50% Less Sodium Beef Broth.

MAKES 10 to 12 servings. **HANDS-ON** 1 hour, 15 min; **TOTAL** 13 hours, 45 min.

BRISKET WITH MUSHROOM-AND-ONION GRAVY

Flat-cut brisket comes in a range of sizes. If you get a large, oblong piece, trim the thin end off, if necessary, so it will fit in a Dutch oven and cook evenly.

- 2 Tbsp. kosher salt
- 1 Tbsp. garlic powder
- 2 1/2 tsp. freshly ground black pepper
- 1 tsp. onion powder
- 1 (5-lb.) beef brisket, trimmed
- 1 (1-oz.) package dried porcini mushrooms
- 2 cups boiling water
- 2 Tbsp. olive oil
- 2 cups reduced-sodium beef broth
- 12 garlic cloves, smashed
- 2 large carrots, cut into 1-inch pieces

- 2 fresh thyme sprigs
- 1/4 bunch fresh flat-leaf parsley
- 3 large yellow onions
- 6 Tbsp. butter, divided
- 1 lb. whole cremini mushrooms, quartered
- 2 1/2 Tbsp. cornstarch
- Garnish: coarsely chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley

- Stir together first 4 ingredients. Rub mixture over both sides of brisket. Place brisket in a parchment paper-lined jelly-roll pan; cover and chill 8 hours.
- Let brisket stand at room temperature 30 minutes. Preheat oven to 325°. Soak dried porcini mushrooms in 2 cups boiling water 10 minutes.
- Meanwhile, cook brisket in hot oil in a large Dutch oven 4 minutes on each side or until browned. Add broth, next



**BRISKET WITH
MUSHROOM-AND-
ONION GRAVY**

**BUTTERMILK
MASHED POTATOES**

Recipe, page 194



FIVE SIDES FOR SOPPING

These easy starches are a snap to prepare, but each is deeply flavorful and all have basic flavor profiles that make them infinitely versatile

BUTTERMILK MASHED POTATOES

Smash potatoes chunky and rustic, or mash them silky smooth.

2 1/2 lb. russet potatoes, peeled and cubed
1 1/2 cups milk
1 cup butter, softened
1 1/2 cups buttermilk

1. Preheat oven to 225°. Place potatoes in a large saucepan with cold water to cover by 2 inches. Bring to a boil over medium heat; boil 25 minutes or until potatoes are tender. Drain and spread potatoes in a parchment paper-lined jelly-roll pan. Bake 15 minutes.

2. Bring milk and butter to a simmer over medium heat. (Do not boil.)

3. Transfer potatoes to a large bowl. Add hot milk mixture; mash potatoes with a potato masher. Slowly add buttermilk, mashing to desired consistency. Add salt and pepper to taste.

MAKES 6 servings. **HANDS-ON** 25 min.; **TOTAL** 1 hour, 5 min.

BUTTERNUT MASH

Roasted winter squash adds bright color to your holiday table.

3 butternut squash
4 1/2 tsp. olive oil
3 Tbsp. butter
Kosher salt
Freshly ground black pepper

1. Preheat oven to 400°. Halve squash lengthwise; remove seeds. Brush with oil; place, cut sides down, on a foil-lined baking sheet. Bake 45 minutes or until

tender. Cool 30 minutes. Scoop out pulp; discard shells.

2. Melt butter in a saucepan over medium-high heat. Stir in squash; cook 6 minutes or until thoroughly heated, mashing with a wooden spoon to desired consistency. Add salt and pepper to taste.

MAKES 6 servings. **HANDS-ON** 15 min.; **TOTAL** 1 hour, 10 min.

BROWNED-BUTTER FARRO

Farro is an ancient form of wheat that has seen a resurgence in recent years. Here we toast cooked farro in a bit of browned butter for a surprisingly delicious side.

1 tsp. kosher salt
2 cups uncooked farro
Vegetable cooking spray
3 Tbsp. butter
Freshly ground black pepper
Garnish: fresh chives

1. Bring 1 tsp. kosher salt and 6 cups water to a boil in a large saucepan over medium-high heat. Add farro; cook, stirring occasionally, 25 minutes or until tender. (Farro will still have a slightly springy texture.) Drain farro. Spread in a single layer in a jelly-roll pan coated with cooking spray; cool completely (about 15 minutes).

2. Melt butter in a large skillet over medium heat. Cook butter, whisking constantly, 7 to 8 minutes or until butter turns golden brown. Add farro to skillet; cook, stirring constantly, 2 minutes or until thoroughly heated. Remove from heat, and add salt and pepper to taste.

MAKES 6 servings. **HANDS-ON** 15 min.; **TOTAL** 1 hour

BUTTERNUT MASH



BROWNED-BUTTER FARRO





BUTTERMILK MASHED POTATOES

HERBED COUSCOUS

CREAMY PARMESAN GRITS

CREAMY PARMESAN GRITS

Look for Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese, which adds nutty flavor and an earthy depth to the grits.

- 2 tsp. kosher salt
- 1 cup stone-ground grits
- 1/4 cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese
- 2 1/2 Tbsp. butter
- 2 Tbsp. heavy cream

Bring salt and 1 qt. water to a boil in a medium saucepan over high heat. Whisk in grits, and cook, whisking constantly, 45 seconds. Return mixture to a boil. Cover, reduce heat to medium-low, and cook 20 minutes or until grits are tender and liquid is absorbed. Stir in cheese and butter. Stir in cream, and serve immediately.

Note: We tested with McEwen & Sons Stone Ground Organic White Grits and Yellow Grits.

MAKES 4 to 6 servings. **HANDS-ON** 10 min., **TOTAL** 30 min.

HERBED COUSCOUS

Use your favorite fresh herbs.

- 4 cups reduced-sodium chicken broth
- 2 Tbsp. butter
- 1 Tbsp. extra virgin olive oil
- 1 1/2 tsp. kosher salt
- 2 cups plain couscous
- 1 Tbsp. chopped parsley
- 1 Tbsp. chopped chives
- 1 Tbsp. fresh lemon juice
- 1 tsp. chopped rosemary
- 1 tsp. chopped thyme
- 1 tsp. lemon zest

Bring first 4 ingredients to a boil in a medium saucepan. Stir in couscous. Cover; remove from heat. Let stand 10 minutes. Uncover and stir in parsley and next 5 ingredients. Season to taste with kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper.

MAKES 6 servings. **HANDS-ON** 10 min., **TOTAL** 20 min.

BEEF SHORT RIBS

This dish looks so impressive but requires little effort. You don't have to use an expensive bottle of wine for cooking, but make sure you like the flavor.

4 lb. beef short ribs, trimmed (about 10 ribs)
1 Tbsp. kosher salt
1½ tsp. freshly ground black pepper
4 cups unsalted beef stock
¼ cup olive oil
1¾ cups red wine
¼ cup brandy or sherry
1 cup drained canned whole tomatoes, chopped
3 celery ribs, chopped
2 medium-size carrots, chopped
1 medium-size yellow onion, chopped
1 small garlic bulb, cut in half crosswise
1 bay leaf
3 fresh flat-leaf parsley sprigs
3 fresh thyme sprigs
2 fresh rosemary sprigs
2 Tbsp. butter

1. Sprinkle ribs on all sides with salt and pepper; cover and chill 12 to 24 hours.

2. Preheat oven to 300°. Let ribs stand at room temperature 30 minutes. Bring stock to a boil in a medium saucepan over high heat. Reduce heat to medium, and simmer 8 to 10 minutes or until reduced to 2 cups.

3. Cook half of ribs in 2 Tbsp. hot oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat 3 minutes on each side or until browned. Repeat with remaining oil and ribs. Remove from heat, discard drippings, and wipe skillet clean.

4. Pour wine and brandy into skillet, and return to medium heat. Bring wine and brandy to a boil; boil 5 minutes or until reduced to 1 cup. Stir wine mixture into reduced stock.

5. Place ribs in a large Dutch oven. Add tomatoes and next 5 ingredients, nestling them

around the ribs; add parsley, thyme, and rosemary sprigs. Pour stock mixture into Dutch oven; simmer over high heat. Place a piece of parchment paper directly on beef, and cover Dutch oven with a tight-fitting lid.

6. Bake at 300° for 3 1/2 to 4 hours or until meat is tender and pulls away from bone. Let ribs stand in Dutch oven, covered with parchment and lid, at room temperature 30 minutes.

7. Remove parchment paper. Transfer ribs to a serving platter, and cover with foil. Skim fat from cooking liquid, and pour liquid through a fine wire-mesh strainer into a large saucepan; discard solids. Bring to a simmer over medium-high heat. Simmer, whisking occasionally, 5 minutes or until sauce reduces slightly. Remove from heat. Add butter, and whisk until butter melts and sauce is smooth. Serve sauce with ribs.

Note: We tested with Swanson Unsalted Beef Cooking Stock.

MAKES 6 to 8 servings. **HANDS-ON** 1 hour, 10 min.; **TOTAL** 17 hours, 40 min.

COQ AU VIN

This variation on the classic French wine-braised chicken uses white instead of red wine, giving the finished dish a lovely golden hue.

Kosher salt
Freshly ground black pepper
6 chicken leg quarters (4 to 5 lb.)
2 Tbsp. olive oil
12 (1-oz.) bacon slices, cut into 1/2-inch pieces
2 (8-oz.) packages fresh cremini mushrooms, chopped
2 celery ribs, chopped
1 medium-size yellow onion, chopped
2 garlic cloves, chopped
1 (6-oz.) can tomato paste
3 cups dry white wine

1 (32-oz.) container reduced-sodium chicken broth

6 fresh thyme sprigs
2 fresh rosemary sprigs
1 (6-oz.) package baby carrots
1 Tbsp. butter

1. Preheat oven to 350°. Sprinkle salt and pepper over chicken. Cook 3 chicken leg quarters in 1 Tbsp. hot oil in a large Dutch oven over medium-high heat 5 minutes on each side or until browned. Remove chicken; wipe Dutch oven clean. Repeat with remaining 1 Tbsp. oil and 3 chicken leg quarters.

2. Cook bacon in Dutch oven over medium heat 4 minutes on each side or until crisp. Remove bacon, and drain on paper towels, reserving 2 Tbsp. drippings in Dutch oven. Sauté mushrooms and next 2 ingredients in drippings over medium-high heat 6 minutes or until browned. Stir in garlic; sauté 1 minute. Stir in tomato paste and 1 cup wine; cook over medium-high heat, stirring often, 2 minutes. Add remaining 2 cups wine, and bring mixture to a boil. Boil, stirring occasionally, about 5 minutes or until reduced by half.

3. Add chicken and bacon to mushroom mixture in Dutch oven. Add broth and next 3 ingredients; bring mixture to a simmer. Place a piece of parchment paper directly on chicken mixture, and cover Dutch oven with a tight-fitting lid.

4. Bake at 350° for 1 1/2 hours or until meat pulls away from bone. Let chicken stand in Dutch oven, covered with parchment and lid, at room temperature 30 minutes. Discard parchment paper.

5. Preheat broiler with oven rack 7 inches from heat. Remove chicken from Dutch oven, reserving vegetables and cooking liquid in Dutch oven. Place chicken on a lightly greased wire rack in a broiler pan.

6. Broil chicken 2 minutes or until skin is crisp and golden brown. Transfer chicken to a serving platter; cover with aluminum foil. Skim fat from cooking liquid. Discard herb sprigs. Bring cooking liquid to a simmer over medium-high heat, stirring occasionally. Remove from heat. Add butter, and whisk until butter is melted and sauce is smooth. Serve sauce with chicken.

MAKES 6 servings. **HANDS-ON** 1 hour, 20 min.; **TOTAL** 3 hours, 20 min.

CIDER-BRAISED PORK SHOULDER

If you want to dress up the humble pork shoulder roast, ask your butcher to butterfly it. Sprinkle the spice rub all over both sides of pork; roll and tie it with kitchen string before browning.

2 Tbsp. kosher salt
2 tsp. dark brown sugar
1 tsp. dry mustard
2 tsp. paprika
1 tsp. ground red pepper
1 (4- to 5-lb.) butterflied boneless pork shoulder roast (Boston butt)
2 Tbsp. olive oil
3 cups reduced-sodium chicken broth
1 cup apple cider
1 Tbsp. honey
2 Tbsp. Dijon mustard
6 bay leaves
2 Granny Smith apples
1 medium-size yellow onion, chopped
1 garlic bulb, cut in half crosswise
1 Tbsp. butter
1 tsp. apple cider vinegar
Garnishes: fresh celery leaves, bay leaves

1. Stir together first 5 ingredients; rub over pork. Roll pork up, and tie with kitchen string. Chill pork, uncovered, 8 to 12 hours.

2. Preheat oven to 325°. Let pork stand at room temperature about 20 minutes.

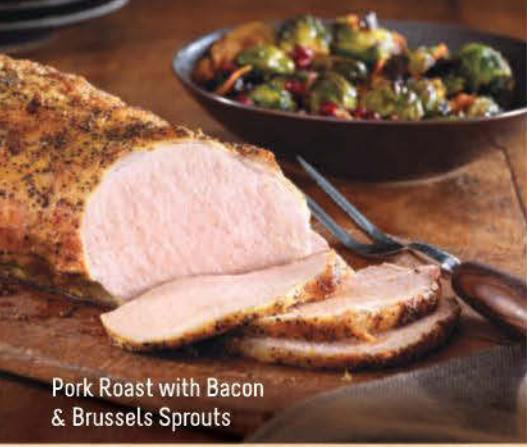
3. Cook pork in hot oil in a large

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Dutch oven over medium-high heat 12 minutes, browning on all sides. Remove from Dutch oven; wipe Dutch oven clean. Boil broth and next 2 ingredients in Dutch oven over medium-high heat. Reduce heat to medium, and whisk in mustard; simmer, stirring occasionally, 5 minutes.

4. Return pork to Dutch oven, and add bay leaves. Cut 1 apple into thick slices. Place onions, garlic, and apple slices around pork. Return to a simmer over medium heat. Place a piece of parchment paper directly on pork mixture, and cover Dutch oven with a tight-fitting lid.

5. Bake at 325° for 3 1/2 to 4 hours or until meat is very tender and pulls away from bone. Let pork stand in Dutch oven, covered with parchment paper and lid, at room temperature 30 minutes.

6. Discard parchment paper. Carefully transfer pork to a serving platter; cover with aluminum foil. Skim fat from cooking liquid, and pour cooking liquid through a fine wire-mesh strainer into a large saucepan, discarding remaining solids. Bring to a simmer over medium-high heat. Cut remaining apple into thin slices, and add to mixture. Simmer, stirring occasionally, 5 minutes or until sauce reduces slightly. Remove from heat. Add butter and vinegar, and stir until butter melts and sauce is smooth. Serve sauce with pork.

MAKES 6 to 8 servings. **HANDS-ON** 55 min.; **TOTAL** 13 hours, 15 min.

BEER-BRAISED TURKEY LEGS

These Latin-inspired turkey legs are a welcome change of pace from the traditional holiday roast.

1 1/2 Tbsp. kosher salt
2 tsp. ground cumin
2 tsp. chipotle chile pepper
1 tsp. ground coriander
1 tsp. garlic powder
1 tsp. onion powder
6 fresh turkey legs (about 5 lb.)
2 Tbsp. olive oil
2 medium carrots, chopped
1 medium onion, chopped
3 dried chipotle, pasilla, or ancho chile peppers
1 cinnamon stick
3 garlic cloves, coarsely chopped
3 cups reduced-sodium chicken broth

1 (12-oz.) bottle Mexican beer

2 Tbsp. butter

2 limes, halved

1. Stir together first 6 ingredients. Rub salt mixture over turkey legs. Place turkey legs in a single layer on a rack in a jelly-roll pan; chill, uncovered, 12 to 24 hours.

2. Preheat oven to 350°. Let turkey stand at room temperature 30 minutes. Cook 3 turkey legs in 1 Tbsp. hot oil in a large Dutch oven over medium-high heat 10 minutes, browning on all sides. Remove turkey legs from Dutch oven. Add remaining 1 Tbsp. oil; cook remaining turkey legs 10 minutes, browning on all sides.

3. Sauté carrots and onion in drippings in Dutch oven over medium-high heat 7 minutes or until tender. Stir in dried peppers and cinnamon, and sauté 2 minutes. Add garlic, and sauté 1 minute. Stir in broth and beer; bring mixture to a boil. Reduce heat to medium, and simmer, stirring occasionally, 5 minutes. Nestle turkey legs in Dutch oven. Place a piece of parchment paper directly on turkey, and cover Dutch oven with a tight-fitting lid.

4. Bake at 350° for 1 1/2 to 2 hours or until meat pulls away from bone. Let turkey stand in Dutch oven, covered with parchment and lid, at room temperature 30 minutes. Discard parchment paper.

5. Preheat broiler with oven rack 7 inches from heat. Carefully remove turkey from Dutch oven, reserving cooking liquid, vegetables, and cinnamon stick in Dutch oven. Place turkey legs on a lightly greased rack in a broiler pan.

6. Broil turkey 2 to 3 minutes or until skin is crisp and golden brown. Carefully transfer turkey to a serving platter; cover with aluminum foil. Skim fat from cooking liquid in Dutch oven, and pour cooking liquid through a fine wire-mesh strainer into a medium saucepan; discard solids. Bring mixture to a boil over medium-high heat, and boil, stirring occasionally, 5 minutes or until sauce reduces slightly. Remove from heat. Add butter, and whisk until butter is melted and sauce is smooth. Squeeze juice from limes over turkey, and serve turkey with sauce.

Note: We tested with Swanson Natural Goodness 33% Less Sodium Chicken Broth and Dos Equis beer.

MAKES 6 servings. **HANDS-ON** 1 hour, 20 min.; **TOTAL** 15 hours, 50 min.

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Spicy Cranberry Pork Tenderloin SERVES 6-8

2 pork tenderloins,
about 1 lb. each
2 limes
1 tsp. kosher salt
1/2 tsp. black pepper,
freshly ground
1 tsp. vegetable oil
12 oz. cranberries
2/3 c. packed light brown sugar
1 jalapeño, seeded and
finely chopped

Preheat oven to 400°F. Finely grate zest from both limes (4 tbsp.) and juice (4 tbsp.). Set lime juice aside. Mix half the lime zest with salt and pepper in small bowl, set aside. Brush tenderloins with oil and place in nonstick roasting pan, fat side up. Roast for 8 minutes, flip and top with lime zest mixture. Continue roasting until internal temperature of pork measures between 145°F (medium rare) and 160°F (medium), about 20-35 minutes.

In medium saucepan, mix 1 c. water with cranberries, brown sugar, jalapeño, lime juice and remaining lime zest. Bring to boil over medium heat. Reduce heat to medium-low and simmer, stirring occasionally, until berries burst and juices thicken, about 5 minutes. Set aside.

Transfer pork to carving board and let rest 3-5 minutes. Add cranberry sauce to roasting pan and bring to boil over medium heat, scraping up any browned bits in the pan with a wooden spoon. Remove from heat, carve pork and serve with sauce.

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Braising Basics

USE THIS TECHNIQUE TO TURN HUMBLE CUTS OF MEAT INTO HOLIDAY MAGIC



1 PICK YOUR CUT Since braising is almost fail-safe, picking the right cuts of meat is key. Tough, economical cuts like shoulder roasts, short ribs, and shanks are your best bets. Slow moist cooking transforms humble meats into showstopping holiday fare.



2 SEASON, STAND, SEAR Sprinkle seasoning on meat, and let it stand—the longer the better. Next, build the flavor foundation by browning the meat. Use the Dutch oven the dish will cook in, if possible. With ribs and similar cuts, brown in batches.



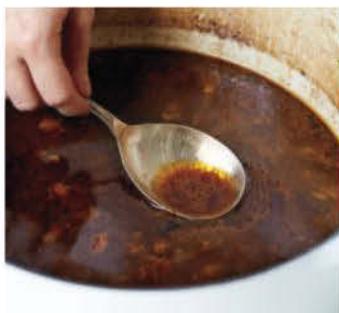
3 DEGLAZE After browning, set the meat aside, and add a flavorful liquid, like wine or stock, to the hot pan. The liquid will boil quickly, and as it does, use a wooden spoon to scrape the pan to release the tasty browned bits. Reduce the liquid to concentrate its flavor.



4 SEAL IN MOISTURE Return your browned meat to the pan, and add some aromatic veggies, herbs, and remaining braising liquid, covering meat about halfway. Fit a piece of parchment paper directly on the simmering surface, and top with a lid to seal.



5 TEST FOR DONENESS Read the meat. If there are bones, the meat should look slack and be pulling away from the bone. But you still need to press and gently pull the meat, which should be fork-tender. If it resists, even slightly, cook it a little longer.



6 COOL AND SKIM Once the meat's cooked, push the parchment back into place, replace the lid, and let stand at room temperature so the meat absorbs more flavor. If you are serving right away, skim the sauce and proceed. If not, chill, covered, up to 2 days.

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BY WHITNEY WRIGHT • PHOTOGRAPHY BY ALISON MIKSCH

PROP STYLING BY BUFFY HARGETT MILLER • FOOD STYLING BY WILLIAM SMITH





BANANA BROWNIE STICKY TOFFEE PUDDINGS

Any remaining sauce makes a great topping for ice cream.

- 1 (18.4-oz.) package fudge brownie mix
- 3 ripe bananas, mashed (about $1\frac{3}{4}$ cup)
- 1 cup sugar
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup light corn syrup
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup butter
- $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. table salt

$3\frac{1}{2}$ cups heavy cream, divided

Garnish: chopped chocolate-covered toffee candy bars

1. Prepare brownie mix according to package directions, stirring in mashed bananas just before transferring mixture to a 9-inch square pan. Bake according to package directions.
2. Meanwhile, stir together sugar, next 3 ingredients, and $1\frac{1}{4}$ cups

heavy cream in a medium saucepan. Cook over low heat, stirring often, 35 to 45 minutes or until dark amber. Stir in 1 cup heavy cream, and increase heat to medium.

Cook, stirring constantly, about 5 minutes or until slightly thickened. Remove from heat, and cool 5 minutes.

3. Cut cooled banana brownies into $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch cubes. Layer brownie cubes and desired amount of sticky toffee sauce in each of

12 small jars or bowls. Beat remaining $1\frac{1}{4}$ cups heavy cream at high speed with an electric mixer until soft peaks form; spoon over puddings. Drizzle with more sauce, if desired.

Note: Refrigerate cooled sauce in an airtight container up to 3 days. To soften, microwave at 30 second intervals, stirring until soft.

MAKES 12 servings. **HANDS-ON** 1 hour, 10 min.; **TOTAL** 1 hour, 15 min.



CRISPY POTATO CHIPS

Slice potatoes as thin as possible.

- 2 large russet potatoes (about 2 1/4 lb.)
- 2 Tbsp. white vinegar
- Peanut oil
- 2 Tbsp. finely chopped fresh chives
- Kosher salt
- Toppings: sour cream, caviar

1. Cut potatoes into thin slices, using a mandoline or sharp knife; rinse with cold water.
2. Bring vinegar and 6 cups water to a boil in a large saucepan over high heat. Add sliced potatoes, and cook 3 minutes. Drain potatoes, and spread on a paper towel-lined baking sheet. Pat dry with paper towels, and chill 15 minutes.

3. Meanwhile, pour oil to a depth of 3 inches into a large Dutch oven, and heat to 340°. Fry potatoes, in batches, stirring occasionally, 3 to 4 minutes or until golden brown. Drain on paper towels, and immediately sprinkle with chives and desired amount of kosher salt.

MAKES 6 appetizer servings.
HANDS-ON 25 min., **TOTAL** 40 min.

EDITORS' PICKS

These deliciously sustainable caviars are from Southern waters.

CAVIAR STAR

caviarstar.com;

① American Bowfin Louisiana; 1 oz. for \$7

② American Hackleback Tennessee; 1 oz. for \$24

SUNBURST TROUT

sunbursttrout.com;

③ Smoked Rainbow Trout North Carolina; 2 oz. for \$57.99

KELLEY'S KATCH

kelleyeskatch.com;

④ Paddlefish Tennessee; 2 oz. for \$27.90

HOPPIN' JOHN NOODLE BOWLS

Serve straight from the stove, and let guests garnish their own bowls.

- 1 (16-oz.) package dried black-eyed peas
- 3 qt. reduced-sodium chicken broth
- 1/4 cup minced fresh ginger
- 5 tsp. soy sauce
- 3 tsp. fish sauce

Toppings: Cooked rice noodles, Sambal Pickles, Soft-Cooked Eggs, chopped raw collard greens, sliced green onions, shredded cooked chicken, cilantro leaves, pickled okra, Asian hot chili sauce

1. Rinse and sort peas. Boil peas in water to cover in a saucepan over high heat 3 minutes; drain.
2. Bring broth and ginger to a boil in a large saucepan over high heat. Add peas. Reduce heat to medium, and simmer 10 minutes or until peas are tender. Reduce heat to low, and stir in soy sauce and fish sauce.
3. Place desired toppings in individual bowls, and ladle hot soup over toppings.

MAKES 10 to 12 servings. **HANDS-ON** 15 min., **TOTAL** 35 min.

Sambal Pickles

Stir together 1 cup coarsely chopped **bread-and-butter pickles** and 2 Tbsp. **sambal oelek** (chile paste) in a small bowl.

MAKES 1 cup. **HANDS-ON** 5 min., **TOTAL** 5 min.

Soft-Cooked Eggs

Bring 6 **eggs** and water to cover to a boil in a saucepan over high heat; boil 1 minute. Remove from heat. Cover and let stand 1 minute. Drain; rinse eggs with cold water until cool. Peel; slice.

MAKES 6 servings. **HANDS-ON** 10 min., **TOTAL** 10 min.

Test Kitchen Tip: Cook rice noodles according to package directions, or sub angel hair pasta.



After the Dancing Is Done

CAP OFF THE EVENING WITH A TOAST TO THE SOUTH AND SOME OF THE REGION'S BEST CHEESES

1 APPALACHIAN

MEADOW CREEK DAIRY,
GALAX, VA

This is the first cheese from this small, sustainable mountain farm. Aged for 60 days, the flavor is bright and buttery and finishes on an earthy note. meadowcreekdairy.com

2 GREEN HILL

SWEET GRASS DAIRY,
THOMASVILLE, GA

If you like Camembert, you'll love this silky-sweet cheese. A perfect match for bubbly wines, it's our No. 1 pick for New Year's Eve. sweetgrassdairy.com

3 DANCING FERN

SEQUATCHIE COVE FARM,
SEQUATCHIE, TN

An American Cheese Society award winner, this oozy cheese is a Test Kitchen favorite. It's grassy, pungent, and so versatile—pair with beer or wine, or sweet or savory foods. sequatchiecovefarm.com

**4 SMOKEY
MOUNTAIN
ROUND**

GOAT LADY DAIRY
CLIMAX, NC

Smoked over apple wood, this blue ribbon winner is as tasty smeared on crackers as it is folded into a New Year's Day omelet or crumbled over a salad. goatladydairy.com



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Warm Bacon-Pimiento Potato Salad

MAKES 8 SERVINGS HANDS-ON: 20 MIN., TOTAL TIME: 25 MIN.

- 2 lb. baby yellow potatoes, halved
- 6 thick-cut bacon slices, chopped
- 3 large shallots, chopped
- 1 large garlic clove, minced
- 1 (4-oz.) jar diced Dromedary® Brand Pimientos, drained
- ¼ cup cider vinegar
- 2 tsp. whole-grain Dijon mustard
- 3 Tbsp. coarsely chopped fresh dill

PREPARATION

Cook potatoes in boiling salted water to cover in a Dutch oven over medium heat 10-15 minutes or until tender; drain well.

Cook bacon in a large deep skillet over medium heat 8 to 10 minutes or until just beginning to crisp. Carefully drain drippings, reserving about 3 Tbsp. in skillet. Stir in shallots and garlic, and sauté 2 minutes.

Add pimientos and next 2 ingredients, scraping to loosen particles from bottom of skillet. Stir in potatoes, dill, and salt and pepper to taste. Serve warm or at room temperature.



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December Sources

RETURN TO RED

Pages 31-38

BEDROOM

Designer: Caroline Robert, New Orleans; perch-home.com. **Wall paint:** Acadia White (OC-38) and **ceiling and trim paint:** Decorators White (CC-20); benjaminmoore.com. **Curtain and pelmet fabric:** Paradise Background in custom colorway; quadrillefabrics.com. **Solid pelmet fabric:** Linara in Tomato by Romo (romo.com), available through Perch; perch-home.com. **Bedding:** For a similar look, try Chloe + Lisette; leontine-linens.com. **Bedside tables:** Ghost Buster in Crystal by Kartell, available through Perch; perch-home.com.

LIVING ROOM

Designer: Ron Wolz, Louisville, Kentucky; bittners.com. **Ceiling paint:** Decorators White (CC-20) and **wall and trim paint:** Red Oxide (2088-10); benjaminmoore.com. **Garland and wreath:** The Original Magnolia Collection; themagnoliacompany.com. **Mirror:** Dauphine Mirror (9792-10); hickorychair.com. **Hurricanes on mantel:** Small Classic Hurricane (4033020); ralphlauren.com. **Armchairs:** For a similar look, try Li393-01 Leather Chair; leeindustries.com. **Coffee table and sofa:** For similar looks, try Alex Tray Top (5494-10) and Marler Tufted Sofa (109-80); hickorychair.com. **Pillows on sofa:** For a similar look, try Bellosuardo Mesa Throw Pillow (35656676); ralphlauren.com.

DESK

Designer: Elly Poston, Birmingham. **Curtain:** Cameron Cotton Tie-Top Drape in 50x84" in White; potterybarn.com. **Fringe:** Cabana Tassel Fringe in Cardinal Red (14); samuelandsons.com. **Mirror:** Ohm Mirror in Red Lacquer; bunnywilliamshome.com. **Rug:** Birmingham Red Woven Cotton Rug; dashandalbert.annieselke.com. **Lamp:** Medium Double Gourd Lamp in Marble Red; christopherspitzmiller.com. **Chair paint:** Chili Pepper (2004-20); benjaminmoore.com. **Chair glaze:** Rust-Oleum Painter's Touch Ultra Cover 2x Gloss Spray in Colonial Red, available through Pierce Taber Paint and Decorating; 205/879-4112. **Cushion fabric:** Tucker in Red (SPF-1300-7);

sisterparishdesign.com. **Cushion fringe:** Printemps Brush Fringe in Cherry (53); samuelandsons.com.

Pillow: Reversible Red Letter Throw Pillow; jonathanadler.com. **Match striker:** Round Match Striker; aerin.com. **Tray:** Lacquer Bath Tray in Red; jonathanadler.com. **Leaf:** For a similar look, try Gold Leaf Trays; jamaligarden.com. **Magnifying glass:** Coral Magnifying Glass (DAG657); l-objet.com.

SPARKLE IN SILVER

Pages 42-44

Designers: Katie Collins, Dallas; 214/770-2302, and Martha Sweezy, Dallas; 214/507-7907. **Wall paint:** Glacier White (OC-37); benjaminmoore.com. **Wallpaper:** custom; for a similar look, try Askew by de Gournay; degournay.com. **Chandelier:** Primitive Chandelier (DL-CD 09MPS); dennisandleen.com. **Mirror:** John Gregory Studio; johngregorystudio.com. **Sconces:** available through Vintage Living; 214/360-4211. **Fireplace mantel:** antique; similar options available through The Mews; themews.net. **Dining table:** Sutcliffe Center Table (807); dessinfournier.com. **Chairs:** Fretwork Side Chair (2552-10); hickorychair.com. **Chair fabric:** For a similar look, try Primo in Ice; nancycorzine.com. **Charger:** 12"D Lime (CVI-20158-0-00); herendusa.com. **Dinner plate:** For a similar look, try Wonki Ware White Dinner Plates (F9864); wisteria.com. **Salad plate:** antique. **Place cards:** Wreath Foil Stamped Gift Tags (F3-80); smockpaper.com. **Calligraphy:** Ragan House Lettering; raganhouselettering.com.

HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

Pages 98-105

Designer: Fran Keenan, Birmingham; 205/821-8183. **FAMILY ROOM**
Wall paint: Skies the Limit (DE 5772); californiapaints.com. **Ceiling paint:** Vagabond (412-2), reduced 25%, and **trim paint:** Vagabond (412-2), reduced 50%; ppgpittsburghpaints.com. **Chandelier:** Similar items available through Stock & Trade Design Co.; 205/783-1350. **Curtains:** Brasserie in Tangerine (384016); kingcottonfabrics.com. **Wing chair frame:** vintage; similar items available through The Nest; 205/870-1264. **Sofa:** For a similar

look, try Dominique Slipcovered 79" Sofa by Mitchell Gold + Bob Williams, available through Defining Home; 205/803-3662. **Coffee table:** vintage, Soho Retro; 205/870-7655. **Side tables:** Similar items available through Richard Tubb Interiors; 205/324-7613. **Lampshades:** English Empire Box Pleat Shade in White, Village Firefly; thevillagefirefly.com. **DINING ROOM** **Wall and trim paint:** Silent Night (552-6) and **ceiling paint:** Vagabond (412-2), reduced 25%; ppgpittsburghpaints.com. **Floor refinishing:** Daniel Whitsett; 205/296-5638. **Chandelier:** vintage; similar items available through The Nest; 205/870-1264. **Dining table:** similar items available through The Nest; 205/870-1264. **Dining chairs:** antique; similar items available through Argent Antiques; 205/871-4221. **Buffet table:** antique; similar items available through Hanna Antiques Mall; hannaantiques.com. **Bar cart:** South Seas Bar Cart; serenaandlily.com. **KITCHEN** **Wall tile:** Similar glazed crackle subway tiles available through Triton Stone Group of Birmingham; 205/592-0202. **Pendants:** Calhoun Glass Indoor/Outdoor Pendant; potterybarn.com. **Island:** custom, by Daniel Whitsett; 205/296-5638. **Countertop:** Imperial Danby Marble, available through Triton Stone Group of Birmingham; 205/592-0202. **Faucet:** Deck Mounted Country Kitchen C-Spout Bridge Faucet in Polished Nickel and **sink:** Shaw's Original Single-Bowl Apron Front Kitchen Sink by Rohl (rohldesigns.com), available through Triton Stone Group of Birmingham; 205/592-0202. **Barstools:** For a similar look, try Constance Barstool (ST306); ballarddesigns.com. **LIVING ROOM** **Wall paint:** Vagabond (412-2), reduced 50%; ppgpittsburghpaints.com. **Ceiling paint:** Teresa's Green (236); farrow-ball.com. **Curtains:** Folly in Aqua by Duralee (duralee.com), available through kingcottonfabrics.com. **Chandelier, sconces, and mirror over mantel:** antiques; similar items available through Tricia's Treasures; 205/871-9779. **Rug:** Hand-Knotted Pakistani, Eighteenth Street Orientals; 205/870-3838. **Headboard:** vintage, reupholstered by Leonard's Upholstery & Repair; 205/251-3021. **Bedding:** Similar items available through Three Sheets; 205/871-2337. 

chair: antique Louis XV-style fauteuil chair, King's House Antiques; 205/320-2535. **Sofa:** Lillian August, available through Defining Home; 205/803-3662. **Pillows on aqua sofa:** Roberta Roller Rabbit, available through Ware & Co; 205/874-9800. **Lumbar pillow on sofa:** vintage, Hanna Antiques Mall; hannaantiques.com. **Coffee table:** Claro Cocktail Table by Mitchell Gold + Bob Williams, available through Defining Home; 205/803-3662. **Demilune table:** antique; similar items available through Ashford Hill for Henhouse Antiques; 205/918-0505. **Set of framed intaglios:** Art Classics, available through Defining Home; 205/803-3662. **Lamp:** antique; similar items available through Tricia's Treasures; 205/871-9779. **BOYS' BEDROOM** **Wall paint:** Sour Apple (DE 5507); californiapaints.com. **Trim paint:** Vagabond (412-2) reduced 50%; ppgpittsburghpaints.com. **Drum shade pendant:** For a similar look, try Sheer Linen Barrel Chandelier; restorationhardware.com. **Rug:** For a similar look, try Natural Hide Rug; serenaandlily.com. **Bed linens:** Asher Duvet Cover; serenaandlily.com. **Paintings:** vintage; similar items available through Urban Suburban Antiques; 205/592-0777. **MASTER BATHROOM** **Wall paint:** Zinc (14-20); prattandlambert.com. **Trim & cabinetry paint:** Vagabond (412-2), reduced 50%; ppgpittsburghpaints.com. **Mirror:** vintage; similar items available through Tricia's Treasures; 205/871-9779. **Sconces:** For a similar look, try Petal Sconce in Soft Silver; circularighting.com. **Rug:** Turkish Tulu, King's House Oriental Rugs; 205/244-1933. **Tub:** Victoria + Albert; similar items available through Kenny & Company; 205/323-5616. **MASTER BEDROOM** **Wall and trim paint:** Arugula (DE 6233); californiapaints.com. **Chandelier:** vintage; similar items available through Hanna Antiques Mall; hannaantiques.com. **Rug:** Hand-Knotted Indian Moroccan, Eighteenth Street Orientals; 205/870-3838. **Headboard:** vintage, reupholstered by Leonard's Upholstery & Repair; 205/251-3021. **Bedding:** Similar items available through Three Sheets; 205/871-2337. 

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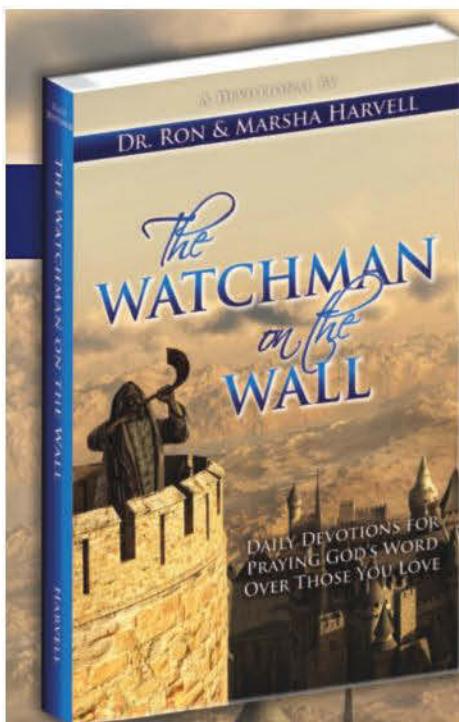
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Merry and Bright

Down South, sometimes a white Christmas just won't do

S

ome things we cannot duplicate here; we will never celebrate Christmas inside a picture postcard. We have no winter wonderland, though once, inspired by a snowfall seen on the black-and-white television, I did scrape a handful of ice from the inside of the freezer to throw at my brother. By the time I got to him, all I had to fling was a handful of rain.

What we do have is electricity. As long as the Tennessee Valley Authority can light up the Southern night with strands of color, shining from every mansion and mobile home, twinkling 'round the baby Jesus, they can have their white Christmas. I have seen lights encircling hay bales, hung on rusty tractors, and wrapped around mailbox posts. In the country, you need a whole lot of drop cord to electrify a mailbox.

I have seen them strung across the grilles of Peterbilts. My mother never takes down her lights, strung on a cedar beam in the living room, though she does unplug them eventually. The rich folks have switched to white lights, a lot of them, to be elegant, I suppose. But it will always be lights of color, shining through a night that smells of cut pine and woodsmoke, that mean Christmas to me.

I have written that I find it hard, as the years tumble by, not to live in the past, especially in a time of year when I would do anything to see the world again like a child. It is why I fill the refrigerator every December with chocolate-covered cherries and buy my brother fruitcakes at the day-old bakery outlet—fruitcake is impervious to time—and watch, for the hundredth time, those oddly animated, 50-year-old Christmas specials about Kris Kringle and the evil Burgermeister and the elf who wanted to be a dentist and the Island of Misfit Toys.

It is important that some things stay the

same, that, at some point this season, someone will say, "We're goin' to look at Christmas lights. Wanna come?"

I go sometimes and sometimes just say no; it is enough to know someone is going. I have a fine memory stashed away of the lights; I do not want it to grow less than it was by heaping a Walmart's worth of new lights on it.

I remember it was first grade, and the big, ramshackle house we lived in, just for that winter, was haunted; but it's really the people who are, I suppose. I was afraid of that house at night. It creaked, and the wind hissed around the eaves. One cold evening, my aunts came by to take us for a ride in an old Chevrolet, rescuing us.

As we drove through the foothills, my face pressed against the window, I saw that the very dark had been conquered, chased away by miles of light, tracing the outlines of ragged trailers and leaning frame houses. Now and then, one of my aunts would mutter, "Their light bill's gonna be high," over the Christmas songs on the radio, and I went to sleep that way. Later, someone carried me inside. I remember I was embarrassed by that; I was a big boy. But the women in my family are strong.

I wish you a merry Christmas, and a very hefty light bill. ☺





Holiday Smoothies That Keep Your Waistline In Check

Most of us don't think about our weight during the holidays. After all, that's what New Year's resolutions are for. But the smoothies on the right are a delicious and easy way to keep your waistline in check during this holiday season and even get a head start on your weight loss goals.

They keep your metabolism active and help you burn fat while retaining muscle mass. In addition, they will keep you full and help you avoid cravings and over-eating by maintaining healthy blood sugar levels.

The key ingredient in all recipes is Almased, a gluten-free and diabetic friendly powder made from non-GMO soy, yogurt and honey in a special fermentation process. The unique, all-natural formula contains no artificial fillers, flavors, added sugars, preservatives or stimulants and has been clinically confirmed to support weight loss and overall well-being.

You can replace one or two meals a day with an Almased smoothie for weight loss, or add it to your regular diet routine for weight maintenance and wellness.

Find more delicious smoothie recipes, get information on Almased and **download** a **free**, easy-to-follow diet plan at figureplan.com (enter source code **SLH**), or give us a call at **1-877-256-2733** (toll-free). You can find Almased in health food stores, at GNC and the Vitamin Shoppe, or visit www.almased.com.

TRY ANY OF THE DELICIOUS SMOOTHIES BELOW TO GET YOUR DIET STARTED

Gingerbread

- 8 Tbsp Almased
- 1 1/2 cups unsweetened vanilla almond milk
- 1 tsp cinnamon
- 1/2 tsp ginger
- A pinch of nutmeg



Caramel Apple

- 8 Tbsp Almased
- 1 cup unsweetened almond milk
- 1/2 cup of unsweetened apple sauce
- 1 Tbsp almond butter
- 1/4 tsp caramel extract



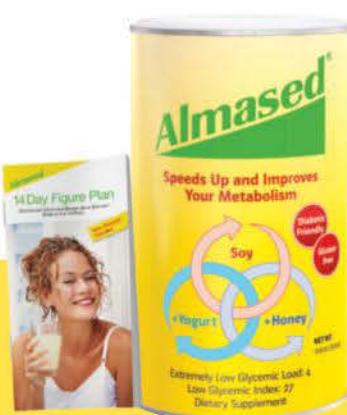
Holiday Nog

- 8 Tbsp Almased
- 1 1/2 cups unsweetened vanilla almond milk
- 1 Tbsp ground flaxseeds
- 1/2 tsp cinnamon
- 1/4 tsp nutmeg
- 1/4 tsp rum extract
- 1 tsp stevia (optional)



Mocha Mint

- 8 Tbsp Almased
- 1 1/2 cups unsweetened almond milk
- 1/4 cup cold coffee
- 1 Tbsp fresh mint leaves or 1/2 tsp of mint extract
- 2 tsp unsweetened cocoa powder
- 1 tsp stevia (optional)





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